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Sidling up to the stars is only a tweet away

Twitter and celebrity. From BFF to 'erased' with one little click of the mouse

JOHN MATISZ
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Thanks to Twitter, the wall between celebrities and the public has been torn down and rebuilt with a new standard for accessibility.

Making contact with your favourite famous person has never been easier. And from the celebrity's perspective, it's never taken such little effort — 140 characters or less — to engage an audience. Or, conversely, to disengage one.

That was the experience of Mike Battista (@phronk), of London, who last month found himself blocked by author Deepak Chopra. Chopra, who has 1.25 million followers, told Battista he was "erasing" him after a disagreement about one of Chopra's psychology tweets.

"I went to check out the rest of his tweets and couldn't, because he had blocked me from following him," said Battista, 33, who has a PhD in psychology.

Battista has had other encounters with the famous on Twitter, including more positive dialogue with filmmaker James Gunn (@JamesGunn) and actress Sasha Grey (@SashaGrey).

"It's always kind of amusing and fun when someone with so many followers actually pays attention to you," he said. "They're tweeting about their jobs or dogs, and you realize they're just people, too."

Another Forest City native, Ed Jackman (@edjackman), 30, befriended Irish singer Sinead O'Connor last year, in large part because of his witty response to one of her tweets. O'Connor, who has since deleted her account, had been talking about her love life and Jackman decided to chime in.

After realizing O'Connor had retweeted his remark, Jackman figured out a way to contact her by email. They talked for a few days, forming a temporary friendship.

"She didn't have to answer my email, but getting one back was like, 'Hey, that's pretty cool. She took the time to do that,'" he said.

Jackman and Battista insist they're not celebrity hounds. They simply enjoy observing how the Twitter explosion has altered the way we interact with famous people.

"Whether it's celebrities, figureheads, CEOs, etc., Twitter drops those barriers," Jackman said. "If somebody feels like they want to interact, they'll respond through that pipeline."

Mike Battista, of London, left, and wellness guru Deepak Chopra made a connection via Twitter — until Chopra blocked him.

CHOPRA: GETTY IMAGES; BATTISTA: JOHN MATISZ/METRO; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

Ghost-tweeters

Who's really tweeting and who's not? It's hard to know

About 290,000 people follow Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Twitter. The thing is, most of the messages that are sent from his account aren't really his.

Harper only "occasionally" sends out tweets himself, a spokesman says.

Like many other high-profile Twitter users, most of the messages that appear under Harper's name and avatar are crafted by ghost-tweeters.

"I assume if it's an institutional individual — if it's a CEO, if it's a big personality, a singer or it's a politician — then they are not doing it themselves," said Greg Elmer, director of the Infoscape Research Lab at Ryerson University.

It's tough to know whose tweets to trust.

"You don't really know if it's really that person and their voice and their actual words," social-media consultant Andrew Escobar said.

Escobar isn't sure what to think about Justin Bieber's massively popular account, which has 33 million followers.

Justin Bieber

CONTRIBUTED/INVISION

"I think my guess with Justin Bieber would be that it's someone tweeting with him," Escobar said.

"I don't really think he makes many mistakes on Twitter, but they very much go the extra mile — if it isn't him — to make it look authentic. There isn't much care in the spelling, grammar — excessive use of punctuation, no capitalization — it's very informal in the way an 18-year-old of his fame would tweet."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NEWS 1

Not-for-profit funding

Community Heritage Investment Program deadline soon

The deadline for applications for the Community Heritage Investment Program is Feb. 11, before 4 p.m.

Administered by the London Heritage Council and funded by the City of London, the program provides funding for not-for-profit organizations and people in the heritage and culture sector. METRO

Learn more

For more information, visit londonheritage.ca.

Namaste

Ever wanted to learn to meditate? Here's your chance

Sahaja Yoga will launch a free five-week meditation program Saturday for people interested in learning how to meditate. Four experienced practitioners will offer their knowledge of exercises and treatments, while musicians will support the program with their performance of Indian classical music.

Saturday morning sessions will begin at 10 a.m. and are hosted by the Downtown Yoga Holistic Centre (236 Dundas Street). All sessions are approximately two hours. METRO

Free sessions

To register, visit imeditate.info.

Snowflakes fly Thursday afternoon as bundled-up student Stephanie Penkarski, 21, of Niagara-on-the-Lake, walks across Western University's campus. London is in for a lengthy cold snap that could bring lake-effect snow, according to Environment Canada. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Brrrrrrrr-ing it on

Winter's back!
Blistering cold, snow in forecast over next week

ANGELA MULLINS
angela.mullins@metronews.ca

A blast of winter headed toward London could pack a triple punch of cold, wind, and lake-effect snow.

The fun starts Sunday when both the high and low are forecasted at -6 C. With wind chill factored, in it will feel somewhere around -15 C, said Environment Canada meteorologist Geoff Coulson.

From then on, it's cold, cold, and more cold in the foreseeable future with highs well below the normal -3 C for this time of the year.

Frigid snaps in January aren't all that uncommon, Coulson said. London posted -15 C with wind chill factored in on Jan. 2, for example.

But this one will be long.

"We're setting up … for a stretch of pretty chilly weather that will take us right through the (next) work week and maybe right through (that) weekend," Coulson said. "Not only will we be dealing with these cold temperatures for a number of days, but we could be seeing a classic setup for lake-effect snow coming off Lake Huron."

That could mean "noteworthy" accumulation if northwest winds lock in over the water. Advisories warning of potentially snowy weather could start as early as Sunday and linger into mid-week.

"This is going to be an opportunity for anyone who hasn't really dug out those really big winter jackets, those real winter boots (to do so)," Coulson said.

Thursday's temperature peaked at -3 C.

Record-setting wind chill

-41 C

Coldest wind-chill value on record for London. It was recorded Jan. 21, 1985, at the airport.

Source: Environment Canada

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Western's paper, council disagree on office allocation

Whose space is it anyway? Proposal to employ newspaper's community-centre space for multi-faith use is up for discussion

ANGELA MULLINS
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Leaders in Western University's multi-faith community are all for an expansion of their space at the University Community Centre.

But they don't want it to come at the student-run newspaper's expense.

"The Gazette means a lot to the Western community," said Dua Dahrouj, president of the Muslim Students' Association. "I don't agree with an expansion if it (means moving) another service."

That could signal the end of a proposed room switch-up that sparked tensions between student government leaders and the Gazette.

The University Students' Council has suggested moving the paper to a smaller space and turning its office into a room for multi-faith prayer and programming. The existing multi-faith room is in a bad location and doesn't have separate areas for prayer and events, council officials say.

Gloria Dickie, head of the Gazette, and members of the multi-faith community say they weren't consulted before council executives decided what would happen. USC president Adam Fearnall has said nothing will be final until the 2013 budget is approved in March.

Dickie made the proposal public in Wednesday's paper, before Fearnall and others spoke with student faith leaders. She and Fearnall met later in the day and agreed to a process meant to give all stakeholders a voice.

Dickie is hopeful that will mean the Gazette is staying put.

"My understanding is that if the multi-faith groups say, 'No, (we don't want the space),' then it's over," Dickie said.

Good as home

40

Number of years the Gazette's editorial staff have been in their office on the second floor of the University Community Centre.

Gloria Dickie, editor-in-chief at the Gazette, is pictured in the paper's newsroom at Western's University Community Centre. The paper is locked in a dispute with the University Students' Council, which has proposed moving the Gazette's office to allow for more multi-faith space. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Tories propose welfare changes

Ontario should claw back welfare for able-bodied people who've been collecting benefits for a long time to motivate them to find a job, Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak said Thursday.

But the government should also reward welfare recipients who are working by allowing them to keep more of their income each month, the Opposition leader said.

Each person on social assistance should have a personalized plan that sets out certain activities they need to perform in order to receive their benefits, Hudak added.

"We want to make sure (to) reinforce in Ontario the dignity of a job," he said.

Hudak was mum on how long people would have to be on welfare before their benefits would start to decline, or how big a reduction they would face, saying he would seek advice from caseworkers, welfare recipients and others.

It's among 12 proposals the Tories are floating to fix what they're calling an outdated and inefficient social-assistance system.

Other ideas include merging Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program into a single program. Another idea, taken from the U.S., is introducing a debit card that could only be used to buy food. The Tories also suggested the province should encourage employers to hire people with disabilities by providing tax deductions for buying special equipment or technology. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Opposition Leader Tim Hudak. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

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Budweiser Gardens.
Arena plays host to beer commercial shoot

Although March's London-hosted World Figure Skating Championships will be out of the national psyche by fall time, it appears its venue, Budweiser Gardens, will be front and centre still.

Labatt Breweries of Canada, which is owned by Belgium's Interbrew, shot a national television commercial for one its most popular beer brands, Budweiser, at the Gardens this week.

Briar Wells, manager of corporate affairs for Labatt, says the advertisement's airdate is to be determined at this point, but will "likely" run in the fall.

The 9,000-seat arena hosted a Budweiser film crew from Monday morning to late Wednesday night, according to Chris Campbell, the director of marketing for the Gardens' management group, Global Spectrum.

About 100 extras were involved in the shoot, Campbell says. He adds the film crew consisted of mostly locals, and received help from members of the arena's operations department. Over the two-day period, Budweiser used the Gardens' back-of-house facilities, hockey rink, and the lower-bowl seating area. During the shoot, the rink's boards and ice surface were covered with white material in order to block out all non-Budweiser ads.

As for other details, Wells says Labatt is doing its best to keep things "pretty under wraps." JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Budweiser Gardens, the site of the beer commercial filmed earlier this week. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Canada's London.
Logo tweak may be under wraps

City officials expect to have a remake of the Canada's London logo in their hands before the weekend.

Local eyes, however, may have to wait a few weeks before the finished product is unveiled.

Elaine Gamble, London's director of corporate communications, said she hasn't decided if the logo will be made public before it takes centre stage in a city-wide marketing campaign.

The campaign, expected to start around Feb. 1, is aimed at leaving a lasting impression of London on people visiting for the March 11-17 World Figure Skating Championships at Budweiser Gardens.

City council approved spending $100,000 on the effort Tuesday as long as the proposed logo saw some minor changes. Several were concerned that using a maple leaf to form the second "O" in London might be confusing for outsiders.

Project partners, including Western University, Fanshawe College, and the Western Fair District, have kicked $80,000 into the campaign. It will include a web portal, billboards, bus-shelter advertising, and banners at hotels.

ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Knights battle Spitfires Friday, Stolarz settling in

OHL. London gets much-needed break from usual two to four weekly games

JOHN MATISZ
john.matisz@metronews.ca

Five goals on 38 shots — not the stat line Anthony Stolarz originally thought would be staring back at him when going over his debut in the Ontario Hockey League.

However, that was the reality as Stolarz — who turns 19 on Sunday — sat down with London Knights goaltending coach Bill Dark this week for a video session.

"You never want to give up five goals as a goalie, especially on a team as defensively sound as London," said Stolarz, referring to a 10-5 victory over the Ottawa 67's last Friday. "But, after looking at the tape, I just felt I looked good, felt comfortable."

If it were not for the win over the 67's, Stolarz probably wouldn't have bonded with teammates as well as he did during a road trip last weekend that had stops in Saginaw, Mich., and Sault Ste. Marie. The newcomer soaked in his surroundings on the team bus, finally getting familiar with the club's nuances after a transfer from the University of Nebraska-Omaha on Jan. 8.

"That's where I got to see the character in some of the guys," said Stolarz, smiling widely.

Since returning home, it's been a bit of a break from the ordinary. Instead of playing their usual two to four games this week, the Knights just have a home tilt versus the Windsor Spitfires on Friday.

Heart-and-soul winger Brett Welychka had a career night against Windsor on Dec. 27, picking up a hat trick in a commanding 9-4 London win in the squad's first game back after Christmas.

"I fed off that — I'm a guy who needs my rest," said Welychka, 18. "I like the conference battle, too, and it's just a game I played really well in."

Something has to give between the Western Conference foes this time around. The Spitfires are reeling right now, having won just two of their last 10 games heading into a Thursday-nighter, while the Knights are looking to bounce back after suffering consecutive defeats for the first time in three months.

London head coach Dale Hunter and staff would not say who they'll toss between the pipes against Windsor, but Stolarz says he's eager to put in a full, 60 minutes of quality backstopping.

Cold facts

How they stack up

London: 1st in Midwest Division (35-7-1-2)
• Coming off 4-2 loss to Sault Ste. Marie
• Leading scorer is Seth Griffith (29 goals, 43 assists)
• Goaltenders are Anthony Stolarz (.887 save percentage) and Jake Patterson (.919)

Windsor: 5th in West Division (16-19-1-6)
• Coming off 3-1 win over Owen Sound (also play Mississauga on Thursday)
• Leading scorer is Kerby Rychel (24 goals, 18 assists)
• Goaltenders are Jaroslav Pavelka (.910) and Jordan DeKort (.898)

**Statistics heading into Thursday's games*

London Knights winger Brett Welychka wires a puck at goaltender Anthony Stolarz during practice at Budweiser Gardens on Thursday. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

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Inquest jurors see the cell where Ashley Smith died

What could guards see? Food slot and viewing window may be main focus of hearing into troubled teen's last hours

Dr. John Carlisle, presiding coroner at the Ashley Smith inquest, arrives at the institution where the troubled teen died. COLIN PERKEL/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Inquest jurors paced the beige-painted segregation cell Thursday where a troubled teen choked to death five years ago as security guards stood watching her.

The tour of the Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, one of five federal prisons for women in Canada, aimed to offer the jury better insight into the place where Ashley Smith, 19, spent the last weeks of her life.

"This was Ashley's cell," declared assistant warden Tony Simoes.

A key difference between how the cell was when Smith died in it and how it is now are the two large windows in the heavy grey door that would have given guards a better view of the interior.

The old-style doors, still on the three adjacent cells, have only a small viewing window at about eye level and a "cuff port" or food slot closer to knee level.

Evidence about what guards could see of the cell interior is expected to play a role given that Smith frequently covered the interior surveillance camera and viewing window with toilet paper.

Bits of toilet paper are still visible on some of the cameras.

Dr. John Carlisle, presiding coroner, urged jurors to examine what would be visible if guards could only look through the food slot — about the size of a large mail slot.

"Just make observations," Carlisle advised the jurors.

Smith choked herself to death in her cell in October 2007, while guards, ordered not to intervene, looked on.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Terror-case Canadian gets 14-year jail term

A Canadian businessman was sentenced to 14 years in prison on Thursday for providing material support to overseas terrorism.

It was alleged Tahawwur Rana supported a Pakistani group whose 2008 attacks on Mumbai, India, left more than 160 people dead.

The judge sentenced Rana in a Chicago court to the prison term followed by five years of supervised release.

Rana, a 52-year-old Pakistani-born Canadian, faced a maximum 30 years in prison.

Jurors in 2011 convicted him of providing support for the Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Taiba, and for supporting a never-carried-out plot to attack a Danish newspaper that printed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005.

The cartoons angered many Muslims because pictures of the prophet are prohibited in Islam.

But jurors cleared Rana of the third and most serious charge of involvement in the three-day rampage in Mumbai, India's largest city, which has often been called India's 9-11.

Tahawwur Rana is shown in a 2011 courtroom sketch. TOM GIANNI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The government's star witness at Rana's trial was admitted terrorist David Coleman Headley, who had pleaded guilty to laying the groundwork for the Mumbai attacks.

The American-Pakistani testified against his school friend Rana to avoid the death penalty and extradition.

He is scheduled to be sentenced in Chicago next week.

Headley spent five days on the witness stand — taking up more than half the trial — detailing how he allegedly worked for both the Pakistani intelligence agency known as the ISI and Lashkar.

Prosecutors also presented Rana's videotaped arrest statement to the FBI, during which he said he knew Headley had trained with Lashkar. They also played a September 2009 recorded phone conversation between the men.

Rana — who owned an immigration consulting firm in Toronto and a home in Ottawa — was accused of allowing Headley to open a branch of his Chicago-based immigration law business in Mumbai as a cover story and travel as a representative of the company in Denmark.

In court, a travel agent showed how Rana booked travel for Headley.

Rana's trial in 2011 came just weeks after navy SEALs found Osama bin Laden hiding in Pakistan.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fracking fuss. Yoko Ono takes son Sean Lennon on a protest over drilling

Yoko Ono, Sean Lennon and actress Susan Sarandon spoke out against fracking — a drilling technique — during a tour of natural-gas drilling sites in northeastern Pennsylvania on Thursday.

The celebrities said the technique is a danger to air, water and human health.

Ono accused the gas industry of disregarding residents' welfare. "They care about making money," she said.

The celebs headed to rural Susquehanna County to see gas wells, compressor stations and other evidence of the Marcellus Shale drilling boom.

They also visited with residents who say they have been negatively impacted by drilling.

Fracking involves the high-pressure injection of millions of gallons of water, along with sand and chemical additives, deep underground to break apart shale rock and free the gas trapped inside it.

The industry and many federal and state officials say fracking is safe when it's done properly.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mother and son: Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon chat as they head to drilling sites in Pennsylvania on Thursday. RICHARD DREW/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

School staffer's claim

Boy, 13, accused of sex attack

A 13-year-old boy is facing charges after Peterborough police allege a female staff member at an area school was choked and sexually assaulted.

Police say the woman told them she was alone in a classroom Wednesday with the boy when she was attacked.

He was charged with sexual assault and overcoming resistance to commit an indictable offence. He cannot be identified.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jail sentence

Top court to hear condom case?

A Nova Scotia man convicted of sexual assault for poking holes in his girlfriend's condoms to get her pregnant is taking his appeal to Canada's highest court.

Craig Jaret Hutchinson of Shelburne County received an 18-month prison sentence in December 2011, and lost his appeal with the provincial Appeal Court earlier this month.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Six-week protest

Queen rejects plea over Spence

Queen Elizabeth has rejected an appeal to intervene in chief Theresa Spence's liquids-only protest, but says she is taking note of concerns for the chief's health.

Spence is camped out on Victoria Island, in the Ottawa River, and says she will protest until the Governor General and the prime minister meet with all chiefs on the plight of First Nations people.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Student loans

Lawsuits planned over missing info

The federal government is being sued over the loss of a hard drive containing personal information about more than half-a-million people who took out student loans.

Merchant Law Group is filing class-action lawsuits in Calgary and Winnipeg, and says it plans to file more in other parts of the country.

Ottawa says the device contained data on 583,000 Canada Student Loans Program borrowers from 2000 to 2006.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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SHOPPERS DRUG MART®

This Dec. 28 photo shows Roy Shanks with a Smith and Wesson-made variation of the AR-15 rifle that he purchased at the RK Gun Show in the Smokies in Knoxville, Tenn. Rural lawmen and lawmakers are against U.S. President Barack Obama's gun-control plans, which would include banning new assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.
MICHAEL PATRICK, KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rural U.S. pushes back against gun proposal

U.S. President Barack Obama's proposed ban on new assault weapons and large-capacity gun magazines struck a nerve among rural lawmen and lawmakers, many of whom vowed to ignore any restrictions.

"A lot of sheriffs are now standing up and saying, 'Follow the Constitution,'" said Josephine County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson, whose territory covers the timbered mountains of Oregon.

But their actual powers to defy federal law are limited. And much of the impassioned rhetoric from the largely rural, Republican-leaning West and South amounts to political posturing until — and if — Congress acts on Obama's proposals to limit gun violence like last month's Connecticut school shooting.

Assault-rifle ban

"I will tell Mr. Obama and everybody else who wants to impose gun control in America that, whether you like it or not, it is against the law."
Richard Mack, former Arizona sheriff

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat, said Wednesday it's unlikely an assault-weapons ban would actually pass the House of Representatives. Absent action by Congress, all that remains are 23 executive orders Obama announced that apply only to the federal government, not local or state law enforcement.

Gun advocates have seen Obama as an enemy despite his expression of support for the interpretation of the Second Amendment as a personal right to have guns.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hostages freed, but death toll at Algerian gas plant unclear

Foreign captives. Kidnapping was one of the largest ever attempted by a militant group in North Africa

Statoil CEO Helge Lund, left, and director of foreign operations Lars Christian Bacher leave a meeting in Stavanger, Norway. Algerian forces raided a remote gas plant on Thursday in an attempt to free dozens of foreign hostages at the BP/Statoil/Sonatrach-run facility. KENT SKIBSTAD, NTB SCANPIX/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Algerian special forces launched a rescue operation Thursday at a natural-gas plant in the Sahara Desert and freed foreign hostages held by al-Qaida-linked militants, but estimates for the number of dead varied wildly from four to dozens.

Militants claiming revenge for France's intervention against rebels in Mali seized the BP, Statoil and Sonatrach-owned Ain Amenas natural-gas complex on Wednesday, taking dozens of foreign workers hostage.

Algerian state television said Thursday that four captives, two Britons and two Filipinos, had died. But the militants said at least 35 hostages had died in the state's rescue attempt. There was no way to independently verify the toll in the remote location, 1,300 kilometres from Algiers.

The reports of high casualties have deeply disturbed foreign governments, prompting a number to criticize Algeria's operation. Britain's Foreign Office attempted to prepare the British public by saying, "We should be under no illusion that there will be some bad and distressing news to follow from this terrorist attack."

Islamists from the Masked Brigade, a Mali-based al-Qaida offshoot, said Algerian helicopters opened fire as the militants tried to leave the vast complex with their hostages. They claimed that 35 hostages and 15 militants died and only seven hostages survived.

Algeria's official news service, meanwhile, claimed that 600 local workers were freed in the raid and half of the foreigners being held were rescued. Many of those locals were reportedly released on Wednesday, however, by the militants themselves. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Multinational terrorists

The Algerian government said it was forced to intervene due to the militants' stubbornness and their desire to escape with hostages.

- **Islamist militants.** Communications Minister Mohand Said Oubelaid said the "terrorists are multinational," coming from several different countries with the goal of "destabilizing Algeria, embroiling it in the Mali conflict and damaging its natural-gas infrastructure."

Special court

Gang-rape trial to be fast-tracked

An Indian magistrate on Thursday ordered the trial of five men accused in the fatal gang rape of a young woman on a moving bus to be shifted to a special fast-track court in New Delhi. The first hearing is to be held there on Monday.

Lawyers for the five have said police mistreated their clients, including beating them to force them to confess to the Dec. 16 crime. A sixth suspect in the attack claims to be a juvenile and his case is being handled separately.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Aurora shooting. Families of victims have different takes on theatre reopening

The Colorado cinema where 12 people were killed and dozens injured in a shooting rampage nearly six months ago reopens Thursday with a remembrance ceremony and private screening for survivors — but for some Aurora victims, the pain is still too much, the idea too horrific.

Several families boycotted what they called a callous public-relations ploy by the theatre's owner, Cinemark. They claimed the Texas-based company — which has been publicly silent since the July 20 shooting — didn't ask them what should happen to the theatre.

Genuine gesture?

"Nobody is going to stop us from living our lives the way that we lived our lives before."
Tom Sullivan, father of victim Alex Sullivan

Some victims said it's important to reclaim the theatre. Others called its reopening insensitive and refused an invitation to attend.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Football star may be in on girlfriend hoax

Manti Te'o. Linebacker still spoke of his dead online love even after he supposedly learned she never existed

Not once but twice after he supposedly discovered his online girlfriend of three years never even existed, Notre Dame All-American linebacker Manti Te'o perpetuated the heartbreaking story about her death.

An Associated Press review of news coverage found that the Heisman Trophy runner-up talked about his doomed love in a web interview on Dec. 8 and again in a newspaper interview published Dec. 11. He and the university said Wednesday that he learned on Dec. 6 that it was all a hoax.

On Thursday, a day after Te'o's inspiring story was exposed as a lie, Te'o and Notre Dame faced questions about whether he really was duped, as he claimed, or whether he and the university were complicit and misled the public, perhaps to improve his chances of winning the Heisman.

Te'o and Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick said on Wednesday that the player was drawn into a virtual romance with one "Lennay Kekua" and was fooled into believing she died of leukemia in September. They said his only contact with her was via the Internet and telephone.

Te'o also lost his grandmother — for real — the same day his girlfriend supposedly died, and his role in leading Notre Dame to its best season in decades put him at the centre of college football's biggest feel-good story of the year.

Relying on info provided by Te'o's family, the South Bend Tribune reported in October that Te'o and Kekua first met in person in 2009 and that the two had also gotten together in Hawaii, where Te'o grew up.

Te'o never mentioned or denied a face-to-face meeting in public comments reviewed by the AP.

Notre Dame said Te'o found out that Kekua was not a real person through a phone call he received at an awards ceremony in Orlando, Fla., on Dec. 6. He told Notre Dame coaches about the situation on Dec. 26.

On Wednesday, Swarbrick said Notre Dame did not go public with its findings sooner because it expected the Te'o family to come forward first. But Deadspin.com broke the story that day.

Chicago Tribune columnist John Kass said the university's failure to call a news conference and go public sooner means "Notre Dame is complicit in the lie."

"The school fell in love with the Te'o girlfriend myth," he wrote.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manti Te'o claims the hoax was painful and humiliating. JAMES BROSHER, SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Questionable words

"I lost both my grandparents and my girlfriend to cancer. So I've really tried to go to children's hospitals and see, you know, children."

Manti Te'o during an interview for WSBT.com on Dec. 8, two days after he said he learned his girlfriend wasn't real.

Germany. Lawyer claims up to 16 objects were left in patient after surgery

A lawyer in Germany claims surgeons left up to 16 objects in her client's body after an operation for prostate cancer. She is seeking over $100,000 US plus costs for the family of the patient, who has since died. Surgical slips such as these are rare, but with millions of operations performed worldwide each year mistakes do sometimes occur.

According to Loyola University in Chicago, citing medical studies, some 1,500 patients in the United States have surgical objects accidentally left inside them after surgery each year. Most of the objects are sponges used to control patient bleeding during long operations. They can lead to pain, infections and other medical complications.

Such cases have prompted doctors to coin the term "retained surgical items" and draw up guidelines to prevent them occurring. These include accounting for all items after surgery — such as with the help of RFID chips — and using equipment containing special strips that show up clearly in x-rays.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Notable cases

- **In March 2009,** a Kentucky jury awarded a woman $2.5 million after she needed surgery to remove a sponge left in her after a hysterectomy three years earlier. Part of her small intestine had to be removed.
- **In Feb. 2010,** doctors in the Czech Republic discovered a foot-long metal tube had been left inside a woman's abdomen five months after surgery. The clinic chief said four staff members had been punished.
- **In Dec. 2011,** a man in Ohio who had two towels left in his body after surgery won a $275,000 settlement from the federal government.
- **In Sept. 2012,** a patient in Australia required a second operation after a surgical instrument was left in the abdomen.

Low-income families

N.Y.C. beats L.A. in kid-obesity effort

A new study shows New York City is doing better than Los Angeles in fighting childhood obesity, at least for low-income kids.

From 2003 to 2011, obesity in poor children dropped in N.Y.C. to 16 per cent. But they rose in L.A. and ended at 20 per cent.

The study focused on those in a government program for providing food and noted that the L.A. program has many more Mexican-American kids, in which male obesity is more common. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Subway sub-size matters.
Was the oven too cold for the bread to fully rise?

Subway, the world's largest fast-food chain, is facing criticism after an Australian man posted a picture on the company's Facebook page of one of its famous sandwiches next to a tape measure that seems to shows it's not as long as promised.

The footlong sandwiches are meant to be 12 inches, but the photo indicates the Australian's sandwich is just 11 inches.

In a response, Subway said that the length of its sandwiches may vary slightly when its bread, which is baked at each Subway location, is not made to the chain's exact specifications.

A Subway meal GETTY IMAGES

"We are reinforcing our policies and procedures in an effort to ensure our offerings are always consistent no matter which Subway restaurant you visit," Subway said in an emailed statement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

San Francisco's new ban.
Nudists say they're being stripped of their rights

A federal judge is set to consider San Francisco's new law that bans public nudity.

Public-nudity activists are requesting that U.S. District Judge Edward Chen on Thursday block the law from going into effect on Feb. 1 while he considers their lawsuit seeking to invalidate the ordinance.

The activists argue that the ban violates their 1st Amendment freedom of speech because their nudity is a political statement.

They also argue the law violates equal-protection rights because it exempts children younger than five and public nudity at certain events such as an annual street fair, the city's Gay Pride Parade and its Bay-to-Breakers foot race, which is noted for the wacky costumes — or lack thereof — of participants.

Attorneys representing the city counter that the ban is a matter of public health, safety and the "general welfare" of all residents. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A sheriff deputy rushes to cover a nude woman who stripped off her clothes during a San Francisco Board of Supervisors meeting last month in San Francisco, Calif. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

British royalty

Princesses drive through red light

It was meant to be a Mini adventure; it nearly became a major embarrassment.

Two British royals on a mission to promote their country ran a red light near Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate.

With photographers and police in tow, driver Princess Eugenie and her older sister Princess Beatrice then took a swift right into the safety of the British Embassy compound.

At least the 22- and 24-year-old sisters didn't have to decide which side of the road to drive their Mini on. The entire 500-metre staged tour was along one-way streets.

Ignoring a red light can bring a fine of $264 US and a month's driving ban in Germany.

"Of course it's forbidden but so far we haven't had any reports," said Berlin police spokesman Carsten Mueller. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

If these people had a better understanding of weather-prediction jargon, perhaps they would have taken public transit. A U.S. forecasting agency is trying out simple, descriptive language to possibly replace its 14 watches, advisories and warnings for wintry weather. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE/ DPA/ROLAND WEIHRAUCH

Clearing up weather lingo

Easy, breezy jargon.
Because you shouldn't need a degree just to understand the forecast

Ever hit a mental whiteout pondering the difference between a winter-storm watch and winter-weather advisory?

The U.S. National Weather Service is looking at the idea that less is more when it comes to such jargon.

This winter, the federal forecasting agency is trying out simple, descriptive language to possibly replace its 14 watches, advisories and warnings for wintry weather — from ice storms to blizzards, wind chill to lake-effect snow.

"The purpose of this project is to use language that is self-evident, that everybody would immediately understand," said Eli Jacks, the forecaster leading the experiment.

The experiment began in December and runs through March 31 at 26 Weather Service offices covering Alaska, Oregon, the northern Great Plains, Michigan, New England, Appalachia and Oklahoma. A separate website for the project avoids confusing people who just want to look up the forecast.

The clear-and-simple approach could be carried over to heat waves, flooding, dangerous wind and other conditions, but that will depend on what the public has to say.

Reaction so far has been partly cloudy. Many people don't want to give up familiar terms that have been around for generations, Jacks said.

But some people welcome the change. Hear, hear, said one Cheyenne-area man as he waited for his flight to California at the city's tiny airport.

"It is confusing. What is the difference between a warning and a watch? To just have it spelled out in plain English would be handy," Roger Longstreet said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wa- wa- what're you saying?

"But then other people say, 'Well you know what, I've always been confused by 'watch' and 'warning' because they both start with 'wa.' Or, 'I've never quite known what an advisory means.'"

Forecaster Eli Jacks, about the reaction of supporters to his experiment that aims to make weather jargon less confusing.

Despite controversy, 'Sexy Social' will go on

After a "slightly overwhelming" few days of publicity, the University of Toronto Sexual Education Centre (SEC) is going ahead with its "Sexy Social" at a club that bills itself as a water-themed adult playground.

SEC is an affiliated levy group of the U of T student union. Monday's event at Oasis Aqua Lounge, organized for its sexual-awareness week, was dubbed an "epic student sex-club adventure" by organizers — and was also labelled as an orgy on a Reddit post.

External education and outreach co-ordinator Dylan Tower told Torstar News Service on Monday that the party was not an orgy — just a safe introduction to Toronto's sex-club scene. "It's very much, come and enjoy the space, there's no prodding or pushing in that direction," he said.

The Facebook page for the event now appears closed, but Tower said access has been limited because some "trolls" made some "uncomfortable comments." Otherwise, the response has been good, and organizers are hoping for a solid turnout on Monday.

"Most of the negative responses we have received have been on a personal level, and mostly drawn from misconceptions which we have been working round the clock to clear up," Tower wrote in an email.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sexy snowball fight

SEC's purpose is to foster a sex-positive attitude in the greater U of T area.

- Last year, the group held its first party at Oasis Aqua Lounge. Tower wasn't there but said he heard it was a relaxed atmosphere, with a snowball fight in the pool.

Provincial growth rates

Gap narrows between West and rest: BMO

Bank of Montreal says the gap between economic growth rates in Western Canada and the rest of the country appears to be narrowing. The resource sector continues to fuel growth in Western Canada, but the bank says it will be slower.

The bank suggests Alberta's growth in the energy sector is being tempered by a lack of pipeline capacity and B.C. has been held back by a softer housing market. By contrast, Ontario's economy is expected to gain momentum into 2014, helped by improvements in the U.S.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Online ticketing

Ticketfly to enter Canadian market

Canadian concertgoers may soon notice there's a new online ticketing company in town aiming to compete with Ticketmaster.

The San Francisco-based Ticketfly announced Thursday that it's expanding into Canada and has reached deals with national event promoter Union Events and Toronto-based Collective Concerts to sell tickets online.

Ticketfly claims it will charge lower fees than Ticketmaster for online purchases and will encourage e-ticketing via Apple's Passbook format. The company has also acquired Calgary-based ticketing company Prime Box Office as part of its move north.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

22 million songs

Amazon opens MP3 store to iPhone, iPod Touch users

Amazon says iPhone and iPod Touch users are now able to buy music from its digital store for the first time.

The company said its MP3 library has 22 million songs available. Steve Boom, vice-president of Amazon Music, says that since the launch of the Cloud Player app for the iPhone and iPod Touch, customers have been asking for the ability to buy music from Amazon directly from their devices.

Apple device users can browse Amazon's MP3 store for music using Apple's Safari web browser.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Horrified Britons just say neigh to eating horsemeat

'Horse burger' scandal. Tesco supermarket chain amps up damage control in wake of discovery that meat products contained up to 29% equine flesh

Putting the cart before the horse? An employee pushes shopping carts past the entrance to a Tesco Extra supermarket in New Malden, Surrey, England, in this 2009 file photo. The Tesco chain has had to apologize to Britons after horsemeat was discovered in some of its burgers. GETTY IMAGES FILE

In Britain, a horse is a horse — not a main course. Tesco, the country's biggest supermarket chain, took out full-page newspaper ads Thursday to apologize for an unwanted ingredient in some of its hamburgers: Horsemeat.

Ten million burgers have been taken off shop shelves after the revelation that beef products from three companies in Ireland and Britain contained horse DNA. Most had only small traces, but one burger of a brand sold by Tesco had meat content that was 29 per cent horse. The contrite grocer told customers that "we and our supplier have let you down and we apologize."

Reaction to the scandal in Britain goes beyond concerns about contaminated food. While people in some countries happily dine on equine flesh, in the land of Black Beauty and National Velvet, the idea fills many with horror.

Labour Party environment spokeswoman Mary Creagh reflected the feelings of many when she said Thursday that eating horsemeat is "strongly culturally taboo in the United Kingdom."

She was echoing prohibitions in Western cultures that go back to 732 AD, when Pope Gregory III declared horse-eating a pagan practice.

Horsemeat has never been a staple of European diets, but from the mid-19th century it was eaten in countries including Britain as cheap filler food for the poor.

"It tended to be in burgers and potted meats and sausages as cheap supplementary food," said culinary historian Annie Gray.

"And it wasn't always labelled, just as we're finding out at the moment."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"Some people say, 'I have a horse. It'd be like eating my grandmother.'"

Paul Webb, director of Exotic Meats, a company in the English Midlands that sells products including horse burgers

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.45¢ (+0.04¢)

TSX 12,674.73 (+65.91)

OIL $95.49 US (+$1.25)

GOLD $1,690.80 US (+$7.60)

Natural gas: $3.49 (+5¢)
Dow Jones: 13,596.02 (+84.79)

Conflict of interest? Flaherty attempted to influence CRTC decision on radio licence

The Conservative government would not say whether it stands by its own accountability rules for members of cabinet after Finance Minister Jim Flaherty was accused of breaching the guidelines.

Carl Vallée, a spokesman for Stephen Harper, declined to say Thursday whether the Prime Minister's Office continues to endorse the rules on ministerial responsibility.

The controversy was sparked by news Flaherty had urged the federal broadcast regulator to grant a radio licence to a company in his Ontario riding even though the rules — posted on Harper's website — forbid ministers from trying to influence the decisions of administrative tribunals.

In his March 30, 2012, letter to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, Flaherty praised Durham Radio Inc.'s ultimately unsuccessful bid to obtain a licence to operate a new FM station for the Toronto area.

The broadcaster, based in Flaherty's Whitby-Oshawa riding, was one of several applicants last year for the hotly contested spot on the FM dial. The company — which already has country and rock radio stations in Oshawa and Hamilton — was proposing an easy-listening outlet.

In a statement to The Canadian Press, which unearthed the letter, Flaherty said he would "continue to be a strong advocate for the people and community I represent. It is my job." THE CANADIAN PRESS

BlackBerry bandwagon. Kitchener defends light poles decorated by RIM

The City of Kitchener is defending its decision to get behind BlackBerry-maker Research In Motion in the lead-up to the launch of its new smartphones.

In an article published by the Waterloo Region Record daily newspaper, the city says it hasn't sold out to corporate interests by making a temporary exception to local policies about corporate advertisements.

The concern involves a decision by Kitchener city leaders earlier this week that allows RIM to decorate light poles in the city's downtown core with banners to promote the new BlackBerry and thank the community for its support.

The plan required local leaders to make an exception to long-standing rules about corporate advertising on city property. Councillors in Kitchener gave the company the go-ahead in a near-unanimous vote earlier this week.

The city's article points out that only one council member voted against the exception.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"Without RIM, downtown Kitchener would not be experiencing its remarkable renaissance."

The City of Kitchener, in a local newspaper article, defending its decision to let Research in Motion hang banners downtown

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HAPPINESS IS A WARM CONFESSION

THE LIST
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

It was the best of weeks, it was the worst of weeks.
And it's not even over.

1 **Lance backpedals on Oprah.** Lance Armstrong pedals an epic two-part confession that he did in fact use performance-enhancing drugs to win a record seven Tour de France titles. If he doesn't end up resurrecting his reputation, at least he's resurrecting Oprah's ratings. Hey, it's not about the bike. Obviously, it never was.

2 **Idle No More.** You can say that again. Aboriginal people are mad as hell and they're not going to take it anymore. So they're barricading roads and bridges to make their point. But the spontaneous uprising seems to be taking more out of aboriginal leaders such as hunger-striker Theresa Spence and Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo than original-target Stephen Harper, whose Teflon coating remains intact.

3 **Idol again!?** Hard to believe, but the talent show that started it all, American Idol, is in its 12th season. Unfortunately, it seems to have descended into a feud between Mariah Carey and Nicki Minaj, while the talent tries to get a few licks in edgewise. I never thought I'd say this, but what happened to the good old days, when professional A & R men identified The Next Big Thing?

4 **Happiness is a warm nutbar.** U.S. President Barack Obama unveils a package of gun-control measures, maintaining that weapons designed for a theatre of war have no place in a movie theatre, a reference to the mass shooting six months ago at a Colorado screening of The Dark Knight Rises. Gunslinger, er, Gov. Rick Perry of Texas angrily rejects any attempt to limit access to assault weapons and instead recommends that we "pray for help." It's worked so far …

5 **Madam, unhand that monkey.** In the inevitable court battle over who gets to keep Darwin the Ikea monkey, the people sheltering him have accused his erstwhile owner of, um, choking the monkey, hitting him with a wooden spoon, forcing him to live in a small crate and making him wear that ridiculous double-breasted shearling coat (OK, I added that last one). If God meant monkeys to go to Ikea, he would have supplied them with little Allen wrenches. Next case!

6 **Bad Dreamliners.** The entire fleet of Boeing 787s, the so-called Dreamliner, has been grounded as engineers try to figure out why the plane's batteries overheat. While they're at it, they should also figure out why I always have to sit between the crying baby and the 400-pound man.

7 **Happy birthday, Betty White.** If you're worried life has passed you by, consider Betty White. She turned 91 Thursday, but she's holding down a regular gig on Hot in Cleveland and this year launched Betty White's Off Their Rockers. Maybe you should Be Like Betty, and make today the first day of the rest of your life.

Follow The Metro List on Twitter @TheMetroList

HE DECLARES, THE WORLD WATCHES

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE INAUGURATION?

JAN. 19

U.S. President Barack Obama and his family participate in a National Day of Service.

JAN. 20

Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden are officially sworn into office at a private event at the White House.

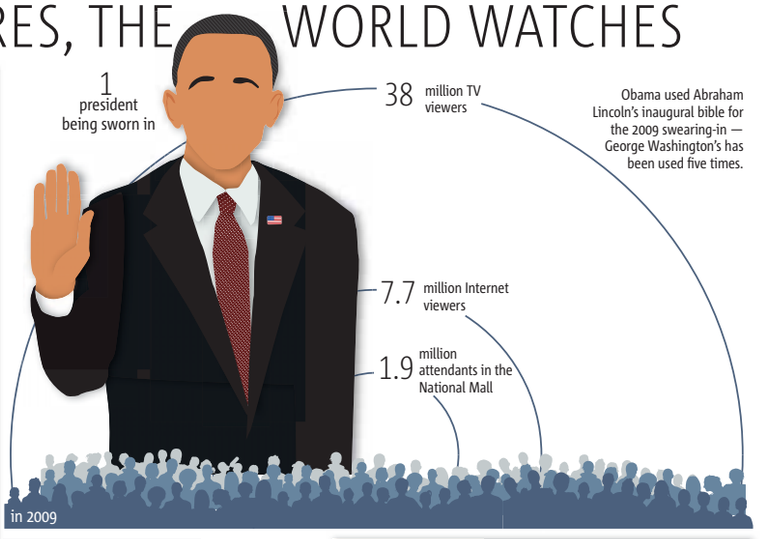
JAN. 21

- Obama, Biden and their families participate in a traditional prayer service at St. John's Church in front of the White House.
- Obama, Biden and their families ride to the Capitol. The public swearing-in ceremony takes place on a platform in front of the Capitol building.
- Biden is sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.
- Obama is sworn in by Chief Justice John Roberts.
- Obama delivers his inaugural address.
- Obama and Biden participate in an inaugural lunch with members of Congress.
- Evening: Inaugural Balls. The president and vice-president attend with their wives.

$4.2 million will be spent on preparing Capitol grounds for the swearing-in ceremony, mostly on the inaugural platform, bleachers and barricades.

SUNDAYS Inauguration Day is always Jan. 20, but by law inaugurations are never held on Sundays. Since Jan. 20 falls on a Sunday this year, the oath is then given privately on Sunday and then publicly on Monday.

35 is the amount of words in the oath for the most powerful job in the world, the U.S. presidency.


1 president being sworn in
38 million TV viewers
Obama used Abraham Lincoln's inaugural bible for the 2009 swearing-in — George Washington's has been used five times.
7.7 million Internet viewers
1.9 million attendants in the National Mall
in 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S RIDE

Barack Obama will travel in his armour-plated Cadillac One limousine to Capitol Hill for his inauguration. But cars weren't always the preferred mode of transport:

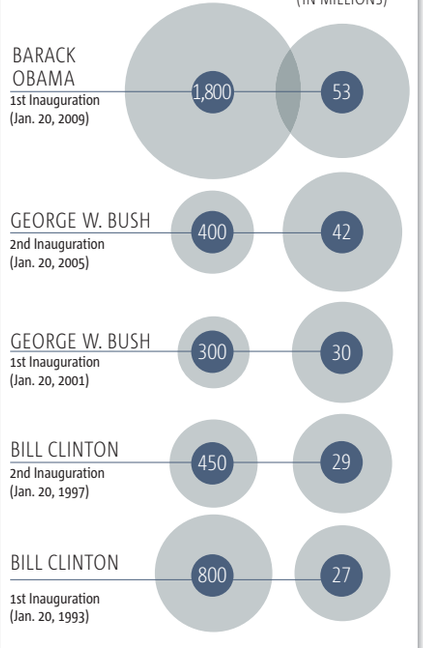
BY CARRIAGE — George Washington took a horse-drawn carriage to Federal Hall, New York City (April 30, 1789).

BY FOOT — Thomas Jefferson (March 4, 1801) walked to his swearing-in from his lodgings less than 300 metres from Capitol Hill.

BY TRAIN — William Harrison (March 4, 1841) travelled to the Capitol by railroad from Virginia (an inaugural first).

AIRPLANE — Lyndon Johnson (Nov. 22, 1963) took his oath inside Air Force One, grounded at Dallas Love Field airport.

PAST INAUGURATIONS



TEXT: METRO WORLD NEWS; GRAPHIC: MIA KORAB; METRO WORLD NEWS
SOURCES: 2013PIC.ORG, CBS, CNN, FEC, JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON INAUGURAL CEREMONIES, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, NIELSEN WIRE

Worth mentioning

Dear Abby advice columnist dies at 94

Pauline Friedman Phillips, who as Dear Abby dispensed snappy, sometimes saucy advice on love, marriage and meddling mothers-in-law to millions of newspaper readers around the world and opened the way for the likes of Dr. Ruth, Dr. Phil and Oprah, has died. She was 94.

Phillips died Wednesday in Minneapolis after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease, said Gene Willis, a publicist for the Universal Uclick syndicate.

Pauline Friedman Phillips GETTY IMAGES

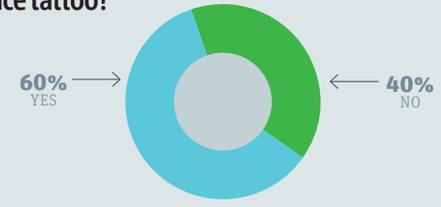
"My mother leaves very big high heels to fill with a legacy of compassion, commitment and positive social change," her daughter, Jeanne Phillips, who now writes the column, said in a statement.

Pauline Phillips wrote under the name Abigail Van Buren. Her column competed for decades with the advice of Ann Landers, written by her twin sister, Esther Friedman Lederer. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Would you elect a politician who has a full face tattoo?



Twitter

@anma_sa: Anyone know a good/trustworthy general contractor that's open to doing small renos in #ldnont?

@MaggeeMaggoo: Drivers' senses of entitlement when they're behind the wheels of their autos never cease to amaze me. #baddrivers #ldnont

@EyeLookMedia: We missed out on the snow here in #ldnont! if its gonna be cold we may as well have snow...dont' ya think??

@StJohn_N: Any suggestions for a 1/2 #marathon this spring or early summer in SWOntario outside of #ldnont #running

@MGirash: Really enjoy receiving the newsletters from Councillor @phubert1961 ! Hope more council members follow his communication example. #ldnont

metro
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metro

WEDDING PLANNER

Weekend, January 18-20, 2013

Mikaella Bridal all lace gown. MIKAELLA BRIDAL PHOTO

Paloma Blanca illusion neckline gown. PALOMA BLANCA PHOTO

Iconic white dress

Styles of 2013 wedding gowns draw on traditional shapes and fabrics

STEPHANIE ORFORD
For Metro

The bride in a white dress is an icon in our culture. Though the wedding may be a very public affair, the dress is a very personal decision. Luckily, there are styles out there to suit every taste.

"We really grow the styles from season to season," says Penina Levinson, fashion co-ordinator at Paloma Blanca, a Toronto-based wedding gown design house, and its sister line Mikaella Bridal.

The styles of 2013 draw on traditional shapes and fabrics.

Lace

This intricate fabric is hip again, lending subtle pattern and texture to this year's wedding gowns. At once concealing and revealing, lace can be used in many ways.

Levinson cites ways to update the look of traditional lace, such as lining it with a different colour to make the lace pattern "pop out."

Paloma Blanca gowns this season use lace in several different ways. On a fitted gown with a sweetheart neckline, lace draws attention to the body's curves. A dress with a ruched lace bodice defines the waist with a ribbon.

Many of Paloma Blanca's veils and boleros have lace edging that complement the dress.

Ruffles

Paloma Blanca has incorporated ruffles into its dresses since 2010, "but they've been redeveloped every season," says Levinson. In 2013, a loose, lightweight ruffle adds volume to skirts, combining with curve-hugging bodices and waist-defining ribbons to create a feminine silhouette.

"You have kind of your classic ball gown in the shape, but it's a little more fun and flirty and young," Levinson says.

Peplum

Currently cropping up in casual dresses, shirts and jackets for women, the peplum has made its way into bridal fashion, "for a fashion forward bride," Levinson says. The style creates a flare outward from the waist to the hip.

"It makes your waist look tiny," Levinson says.

People can be intimidated by the bold style, she says, "but once they try it on it looks really good on."

Keyhole Backs

This dress style provides an elegant way to balance out covered shoulders by revealing something else — the back. In a keyhole back, sheer shoulder coverings button at the top of the back and open up in a window below.

"If somebody wanted a little coverage for the ceremony, this is an interesting way to be able to do it," Levinson says.

Regardless of the style, a wedding gown should always fit snugly, especially if it's strapless, Levinson advises. "But most of all a dress should make the bride feel beautiful and like a queen."

Mikaella Bridal all lace keyhole back gown. MIKAELLA BRIDAL PHOTO

The Paloma Blanca peplum gown.

Paloma Blanca all-lace gown. Lace is hip again, lending subtle pattern and texture to this year's wedding gowns.

Choosing the perfect place takes planning

STEPHANIE ORFORD
For Metro

A destination wedding can be a romantic getaway, but getting hitched in your hometown can be just as sublime, but each type of wedding has its own challenges. ERIN WALLIS PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTOS

Barefoot wedding vows on a tropical beach. Sound ideal? A destination wedding can be a romantic getaway, but getting hitched in your hometown can be just as sublime, according to Mary Swaffield, president and lead wedding planner at Lavish Weddings, based in Calgary.

Each type of wedding has its own challenges.

Destination weddings

A getaway wedding is a fabulous escape. Add to that the breathtaking scenery and fun local décor, food and drinks, and you have yourself a pretty memorable party.

A destination wedding can be less expensive for the happy couple than a hometown wedding, but there may be strings attached, says Swaffield. In-house wedding planners at resorts aren't paid directly by the wedding party. Instead, they earn commission from the resort.

This means that guests can end up paying a lot more at a resort than they would at a hometown wedding, Swaffield says.

When it comes to decor, food, and entertainment, all-inclusive resorts tend to offer all-inclusive weddings with a limited range of choices. This can save the couple stress, but it can also be a little cookie-cutter. Swaffield advises finding external vendors and venues to provide a better range of choice and better deals.

Hometown weddings

There's enough unpredictability (and excitement) at any wedding without the added complications of long-distance planning, travel and language barriers that a destination wedding can bring, Swaffield says.

Getting married in your hometown also allows for a longer guest list, which prevents the hurt feelings that happen when potential guests don't make the short list, as tends to happen with destination weddings, Swaffield says.

The challenge of more guests is a larger-scale event — a larger venue and more food, drinks and party favours. Thankfully, in your hometown there's often a greater range of options at many price points.

But make sure you plan well ahead of time.

"People struggle really hard to find great venues," Swaffield says, adding that good locations book up 12 to 18 months in advance. Keeping the guest list to less than 150 and choosing a non-Saturday for the event will help, too, she says.

Whether you choose a destination or a hometown wedding, planning ahead is key to minimizing stress and making the most of your special day.

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st Ideas For Your Special Day!

One way you can save on your wedding expenses is to use faux flowers for your bouquets and centrepieces. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

How to save a buck or two

KATE DRUMMOND
2 For Couples

"Planning an affordable wedding doesn't mean it has to be cheap," says Jessica Bianchi, the budget-balancing founder of ThriftyBrideToBe.com.

Along with money-saving tips and wedding-related classifieds, the website offers creative solutions for brides who say "I do" to saving a buck or two, whether it's on their entire wedding or certain aspects of it. Splurging on those killer Manolos might mean scrimping elsewhere.

Here are some surprising and creative money-saving tips from Bianchi.

Gown: When it comes to wedding dresses, "consignment" isn't code for a gaudy explosion of taffeta from the 1980s. Consignment boutiques carry many gowns that have never been worn because the wedding never happened or because the bride found a second gown that she liked better.

Flowers: Carrying a brooch bouquet made of beautiful costume jewelry that you collect from your relatives (your something borrowed) or vintage boutiques (your something old) is a stunning alternative to fresh flowers. It's unique, personal and you don't have to worry about wilted or discoloured blooms. You can also save thousands of dollars if you use faux flowers for your bouquets and centrepieces.

Wine: Scope out local brew-on-premises wine facilities, where you can buy wine for as little as $3 per bottle. If your venue lets you buy your own wine, you can put a bottle of red and a bottle of white on each table.

Cake: Multi-tiered wedding cakes look fabulous in photos. But let's face it, people don't really eat the cake and many venues charge exorbitant fees to slice and plate a piece for each guest. Rather than forgoing your dream of a three-tiered cake, ask your baker to use faux slabs for the bottom tiers. These will be covered in fondant and decorated to look real, but only the top layer will be edible.

GET THE ULTIMATE WEDDING PLANNER IPAD APP BY 2 FOR COUPLES ON THE APP STORE.

6 truths about your wedding day

KATE DRUMMOND
2 For Couples

It's hard to know what to expect for your own wedding until the glorious day arrives. JUPITERIMAGES/POLKA DOT/THINKSTOCK

You can look at countless wedding photos online, but it's hard to know what to expect for your own wedding until the glorious day arrives and you are actually experiencing it.

Here are six helpful truths about your wedding day that you won't learn from the pretty pics on Pinterest.

1 You Won't Get Much Sleep The Night Before. Nerves and off-the-charts giddiness will leave you tossing and turning the night before your wedding and you will likely wake up before sunrise. You will need some sleep, so skip the post-rehearsal dinner drinks with your friends and head to bed. You will get to party the night away with them the next day.

2 You Will Need A Nice Hanger For Your Gown. Your photographer will want shots of your gown before you step into it and there's no way a cheap wire hanger from the dry cleaners will do. We love these handmade, customizable hangers from Etsy — they are an adorable keepsake and they photograph beautifully. Plus, it's another cute way to add a personal touch to your big day.

3 Your Dress Will Get Dirty. This truth is hard to swallow, but the bottom of your pristine gown will get dirty and possibly even damaged after a day of walking outside, posing for photos and dancing. Try to keep it as clean as possible before the photos and ceremony. Once you are at the reception, you will be so happy that you won't care about a bit of dirt on your skirt.

4 You Will Cry (At Least Once). But they will be happy tears. With so many special moments between you and your sweetie and the overall significance of the day, you will likely cry at least once. Throw in touching speeches from friends, family and your new spouse and you are left with lots of opportunities to shed a sweet tear or two. This is why waterproof mascara is your friend.

5 You Won't Believe How Quickly It Goes By. After months of wedding plan ning, it's easy to fall into a forward-thinking frame of mind, always focusing on the future and imagining the details of your big day. Well, this is it. Your big day is here. So be present, enjoy all of the love-filled moments, gush over the beautiful cake and decor details, smile lots and soak up that magical feeling. You can't slow down time, but the day won't fly by quite so quickly if you stay in the moment.

6 You Will Be Overwhelmed With Love and Happiness. It's an indescribably heartwarming feeling to realize that so many people have come to celebrate you and your spouse and your expression of love and commitment to each other. At the reception, take a minute with your groom to step back and take a look at the room, at all of the wonderful friends and family who have come to share such a special day with you. It will make you feel warm and fuzzy and it's extra special if you can experience this moment with your new hubby.

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Discuss these topics before you get married

KATE DRUMMOND
2 For Couples

It's important to sit down as a couple and talk about your future together before you get married. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Wedding planning involves a long to-do list and planning your marriage deserves equal (if not more) time as choosing your cake and centrepieces.

"Many couples don't take the time to discuss these important topics before getting married," says Dr. Paul Sago, a marriage counsellor and author of Planning Your Marriage: A Workbook Guide for Engaged and Married Couples.

Addressing the topics below doesn't always lead to easy conversations, but it's essential that you discuss each of them in-depth now, rather than waiting for a rude awakening after you've said "I do."

Your Home. Even if you are already shacked up, you won't live in that second-floor rental unit forever and it's important to discuss the type of home you envision sharing together in the future. Do you want to live in a condo? A house with a yard and a two-car garage? Would you consider moving to a different city?

Religion. Whether you are an interfaith couple or you share the same beliefs, you have to discuss the role of religion in your relationship. While your families may try to influence the role of religion in the lives of your children, especially, it's important "that the two of you decide how you will practise your faith and train your children" before the wedding, Sago says.

Children. Before you even agree to marry someone, you need to make sure that you on the same page regarding offspring. Do you both want to have children? If so, how many? If you can't have biological children, would you consider adoption or in vitro fertilization? Do you share the same discipline philosophy?

Sex. Being intimate is an important part of a married couple's relationship. But having sex isn't enough to guarantee marital intimacy: Talking about sex is also important. "You need to feel that you can trust telling your partner your sexual needs," Sago says. Do you feel comfortable sharing your desires with your partner? How many times a week do you expect to have sex in your marriage? Are you happy with your sex life?

Money. Every couple has their own way of managing their finances. While there is no right or wrong method, Sago warns against keeping separate bank accounts, unless you also have a shared one. Will you combine all of your finances?

Communication. That's right — you have to communicate about communication. If you have communication issues now, then it's going to be very difficult to work through bumps in the road once a mortgage and children come along. "Arguments never solve a problem," Sago says.

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Dame Maggie Smith stars in Quartet — a story of a once famous singing group now retired and living together. HANDOUT

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

Aging a little too well

Crowd pleaser. The Reel Guys agreed Quartet was a nice look at old age, but ultimately couldn't stomach the ending

Richard: Mark, this could have gone one of two ways. It could've been a depressing look at the difficulties of growing old, or it could have turned into one of those "loveable old coot" movies. Instead, like the recent The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, it treats its elderly characters like vibrant, real people, even though they use walkers and have lapses of memory. Medical conditions aside, emotionally they are as rich — if not richer — than 90 per cent of the characters we see in any Katherine Heigl romantic comedy. What did you think?

Mark: Richard, they are lovable old coots, or at least high-functioning geezers. It's an idyllic view of old age — everyone has money and talent, and only a little bit of dementia, a wisp of a stroke, or a slightly malfunctioning hip. If they showed what old age was really like, the movie would be unwatchable. The great thing about the movie is the cast — and what a cast! Could Billy Connolly be more charming? Tom Courtenay more noble? Maggie Smith more ... Maggie Smith? But the film falls down in the storytelling. There's just not enough there. If you're going to cast these legends of stage and screen, you need to give them more to do.

RC: It is predictable, just this side of twee and don't get me started about the unsatisfying ending. Luckily it's also a crowd pleaser due to the chemistry of the cast. I loved Billy Connolly's roguishness and the sense of real warmth that exists between all the main players. That Dustin Hoffman learned a thing or two about directing actors over the years.

Synopsis

The action centres around Beechham House, a luxurious retirement home for aging musicians. Three quarters of a once famous vocal quartet, Reginald (Tom Courtenay), Cissy (Pauline Collins), and Wilfred (Billy Connolly), live there quietly until their former diva, Jean (Dame Maggie Smith), arrives. Her presence stirs up old feelings from ex-husband Reggie but might also be the key to changing the fortunes of the cash-strapped retirement home.

Star ratings:

- Richard: ●●●○○
- Mark: ●●○○○

MB: The ending is horrible, one of the worst cheats in cinematic history. I was looking forward to those venerable actors tackling Verdi. But the scene I really enjoyed was Tom Courtenay teaching a class of visiting teenagers and trying to explain opera through comparisons with rap and hip-hop. But the entire plot revolves around the will-she-or-won't-she decision of Maggie Smith to join the quartet.

The script has her make that decision too blithely after resisting so vociferously. I just wasn't convinced. And she goes from imperious wit in her grand entrance to empathetic sensitivity way too quickly. The movie's not long. Maybe a few scenes were excised?

RC: It feels a bit like there was some unfortunate chopping, but I have to say overall the actors carried the day for me. Weak story and even weaker ending notwithstanding, it's a crowd pleaser.

MB: And it looks great. It was a pleasure spending 90 minutes in a perfectly groomed mansion in the English countryside. When I start to lose it, make me a reservation.

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Ontario

Action

The Last Stand

Director. Kim Jee-Woon

Stars. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Johnny Knoxville

It may have been nearly a decade since Arnold Schwarzenegger has led a big-screen blockbuster, but in The Last Stand, the sexagenarian is proving he's still got some fight in him. The threadbare story of a small-town sheriff determined to detain a drug lord from escaping into Mexico certainly doesn't break any new ground in the action department, but for fans of the genre, it's a welcome and winking return from the former Governator.

STEVE GOW

Horror

Mama

Director. Andres Muschietti

Stars. Jessica Chastain, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau

Tragic circumstances led to two small children (Megan Charpentier and Isabelle Nélisse) being abandoned for five years in a cabin in the woods. Rescued, they are adopted by their uncle (Game of Thrones's Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) and his girlfriend (Jessica Chastain) but the question remains, who is the mysterious Mama they keep talking about? Mama has some nice subtle creepy reveals, a vivid dream sequence and, of course, the ethereal Mama, who occasionally resembles a giant hairball on the floor, but is eerie nonetheless.

RICHARD CROUSE

Drama

Rust and Bone

Director. Jacques Audiard

Stars. Marion Cotillard, Matthias Schoenaerts and Armand Verdure

Vagrant Ali is given custody of his son when his wife is found to have used the five-year-old as a drug mule. Ali's irresponsible, angry and impoverished, working the criminal fringes as an itinerant security guard and wrestler, hardly the ideal parent. But he meets Stéphanie, who lost both legs in an aquarium whale attack, and discovers his selflessness, long buried. Ali and Stéphanie's stories are the dramatic bones of the film, but its heart is the shadowy figure of the little boy.

ANNE BRODIE

Statham strong-arms his way to the top of the action heap

Parker. Perpetually stubbly actor relishes his brawly roles — this time out he plays a crook with a heart of gold opposite JLo

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

Parker hits theatres next Friday. HANDOUT

Statham continues his bid to be the 21st century answer to his Expendables co-stars Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, a purveyor of action films that can be big and loud but don't have to be dumb. His latest finds him playing a crafty crook with a surprisingly strict moral code — even when faced with the likes of Jennifer Lopez.

Do you consider this in the same vein as things like the Mechanic and the Italian Job, putting a modern spin on older action material?

You wouldn't be far wrong in saying that. Parker's a different sort of animal for me, though. He's a crook, he's a criminal, but there's something about him that makes you forgive what he's doing in some way, and I think there's an interesting aspect to that. You know, you're not supposed to like crooks or criminals. You know, he's devoted to his girlfriend. There's something about that as well. Crooks and criminals usually haven't got many morals. They do whatever they can for their ill-gotten gains... but this guy has a particular way of taking it, and he has a way of protecting what he cares about.

It's interesting, that girlfriend character, since you also have Jennifer Lopez in the movie, and people would assume, you two together on screen...

You'd expect something. When's it going to go off? I know, some people will go, "Oh, I don't believe it, it's stupid. How could he resist? It's f—ing Jennifer Lopez. What, is he blind? Is he stupid?" But (director) Taylor (Hackford) was insistent on keeping this guy true to himself and him having a strength in departments where other men were weak.

He's kind of an OCD criminal, particularly with one very detailed line he delivers before dispatching a bad guy.

Yes! "You were supposed to torch the hay bales behind the livestock pavilion!" Boom! I love that line. I'm glad you noticed that, I loved that line. When I read the screenplay, I was like, "Oh my God, I f—ing love this guy."

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., JAN.18 TO THURS., JAN. 24. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. COMPLETE LISTINGS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT METRONEWS.CA/MOVIES.

London

Hyland Cinema
240 Wharncliffe Road South, 519-913-0313

Anna Karenina (14A) Fri 12:45 Sat 4:45 Sun 6:45 Mon 12:40 Tue 2:35 Wed-Thu 9
Hyde Park on Hudson (PG) Fri 5:15-9:15 Sat 12:50-7:10 Sun 1-5 Mon 5:10-9:10 Tue 12:50-7:10 Wed 1-5 Thu
Rust and Bone (18A) Fri 3:05-7 Sat 2:35-9 Sun 2:45-9 Mon 3-6:55 Tue 4:55-9 Wed 2:45-6:50 Thu 12:50-3:10-4:55-7:15

Rainbow Cinemas London
355 Wellington St., 519-434-3073

Broken City (14A) Fri-Thu 1:05-3:40-6:55-9:20
Django Unchained (18A) Fri-Thu 1-4:15-7:40
Gangster Squad (14A) Fri-Thu 1:20-3:40-7-9:40
Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters (14A) Thu 10
The Last Stand (14A) Fri-Thu 1:10-3:35-7:10-9:30
Les Misérables (PG) Fri-Wed 12:55-4:05-7:30 Thu 12:55-4:05-7
Silver Linings Playbook (14A) Fri-Thu 1:15-3:45-7:05-9:35
Zero Dark Thirty (14A) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:55-7:25

Western Film Room 340, UCC Building

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (14A) Fri-Thu 9:45
Skyfall (PG) Fri 7 Sat-Sun 1-4-7 Mon-Thu 7

Wellington 8 Cinemas
983 Wellington Rd. S, 519-685-2529

Broken City (14A) Fri 7-9:40 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:30-7-9:40 Mon-Thu 5:20-8:15
Django Unchained (18A) Fri 7:30 Sat-Sun 12:10-3:50-7:30 Mon-Thu 7:40
Gangster Squad (14A) Fri 6:40-9:25 Sat-Sun 1-3:45-6:40-9:25 Mon-Thu 5-7:45
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) Sat-Sun 12:40
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Fri 7:50 Sat-Sun 4:10-7:50 Mon-Thu 8
The Last Stand (14A) Fri 6:50-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:20-3:20-6:50-9:30 Mon-Thu 5:10-8:10
Mama (14A) Fri 7:10-9:50 Sat-Sun 1:10-4:15-7:10-9:50 Mon-Thu 5:50-8:20
Les Misérables (PG) Fri 7:20 Sat-Sun 12-3:40-7:20 Mon-Thu 7:30
Zero Dark Thirty (14A) Fri 7:40 Sat-Sun 12:30-4-7:40 Mon-Thu 7:50

Cineplex Odeon Westmount & VIP Cinemas
755 Wonderland Road South, 519-474-2796

Django Unchained (18A) Fri 3:20-7-10:35 Sat 11:50-3:20-7:25-10:50 Sun 11:50-3:20-7-10:35 Mon 8:15 Tue 5:50-9:30 Wed-Thu 8:15
Gangster Squad (14A) No Passes Fri

Zero Dark Thirty. HANDOUT

5-7:45-10:30 No Passes Sat 11:35-2:15-5-7:45-10:30 No Passes Sun 11:35-2:15-5-7:45-10:25 No Passes Mon 7:10-9:50 No Passes Tue 4:10-7-9:50 No Passes Wed 1:15-7:10-9:50 No Passes Thu 7:10-9:50 No Passes Fri 4:25-7:30-10:05 No Passes Sat 1:30-4:10-7-9:40 No Passes Sun 1:10-4:10-7:30-10:05 No Passes Mon 7:45 No Passes Tue 4:10-7:30-10:05 No Passes Wed-Thu 8
Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters 3D (14A) Thu 10
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Fri 3-6:50-10:35 Sat-Sun 11:25-3-6:50-10:35 Mon 8 Tue 5:30-9:15 Wed-Thu 8
The Impossible (PG) Fri 4:45-7:30-10:20 Sat-Sun 11:30-2:05-4:45-7:30-10:20 Mon 7-9:45 Tue 4-6:50-9:40 Wed 1:25-7-9:45 Thu 7-9:45 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Lincoln (PG) Fri 3:05-6:30-9:50 Sat 2:50-6:30-9:50 Sun 11:30-2:50-6:30-9:50 Mon 6:35-9:50 Tue 3:05-6:30-9:50 Wed 1:20-6:35-9:55 Thu 6:35-9:55 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
The Metropolitan Opera: La Clemenza Di Tito Encore (STC) Mon 6:30
The Metropolitan Opera: Maria Stuarda Live (STC) Sat 12:55 Sat 12:55
Les Misérables (PG) Fri-Sun 3:10-6:40-10:10 Mon 7:30 Tue 5-8:45 Wed 1:15-7:30 Thu 7:30
Silver Linings Playbook (14A) Fri 4:10-7:10-10:05 Sat 12-4:35-7:10-10:05 Sun 1:15-4:10-7:10-10:05 Mon 10:05 Tue 4:10-7:10-10:05 Wed 1:30-6:45-9:25 Thu 6:45 Fri 3:30-6:30-9:30 Sat 4:40-7:30-10:30 Sun 12:40-3:40-6:30-9:30 Mon 7:15 Tue 3:40-6:30-9:30
U2 3D (PG) Wed-Thu 7:30
Wreck-It Ralph (PG) Sat-Sun 12:30
Zero Dark Thirty (14A) No Passes Fri 3:40-7:20-10:40 No Passes Sat 12:10-3:40-7:20-10:45 No Passes Sun 12:10-3:40-7:20-10:40 No Passes Mon 6:30-9:55 No Passes Tue 3:10-6:40-10:10 No Passes Wed-Thu 6:30-9:55 No Passes Fri 7-10:30 No Passes Sat 11:50-3:10-6:30-10:05 No Passes Sun 12-3:20-7-10:25 No Passes Mon 8:15 No Passes Tue 3:20-7-10:25 No Passes Wed-Thu 8:30

SilverCity London
1680 Richmond St, 519-673-4125

Broken City (14A) Fri-Sat 12-2:35-5:10-7:55-10:40 Sun 12-2:35-5:10-7:55-10:30 Mon 1:15-4:30-7:20-10:10 Tue 1:15-4:30-7:20-10:15 Wed 4:30-7:20-10:10 Thu 1:15-4:30-7:40-10:15 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Django Unchained (18A) Fri-Sun 12:05-3:35-6:55-10:35 Mon 2:30-6:50-10:05 Tue 2:30-6:50-10:10 Wed-Thu 2:30-6:50-10:05
Gangster Squad (14A) No Passes Fri 12:10-2:40-5:15-8:05-10:45 No Passes Sat 12:10-2:40-5:15-8-10:45 No Passes Sun 12:10-2:40-5:15-8:05-10:30 No Passes Mon 1:35-4:25-7:25-9:55 No Passes Tue 1:40-4:25-7:25-9:55 No Passes Wed-Thu 1:35-4:25-7:25-9:55
The Guilt Trip (PG) Fri-Sun 7:35-10 Mon 10 Tue 7:35-10 Wed 7:45-10 Thu 9:50
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey — An IMAX 3D Experience (PG) Fri-Sun 12-3:30-7-10:40 Mon-Thu 1-4:40-8:15
The Last Stand (14A) Fri 12:15-2:45-5:20-8:20-10:55 Sat 12:15-2:45-5:20-8:05-10:45 Sun 12:15-2:45-5:20-8:20-10:40 Mon-Thu 1:20-4:20-7-9:45
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri 7:05-10:10 Sat 7:25-10:10 Sun 7:15-10:10 Mon 7:30-10:20 Tue 7:35-10:20 Wed 10:15 Thu 7:30-10:25
Looney Tunes: Back in Action (STC) Sat 11
Mama (14A) Fri-Sun 12:25-3-5:25-7:50-10:25 Mon 2-4:35-7:35-10:15 Tue 2:40-5-8-10:40 Wed-Thu 2-4:35-7:35-10:15
The Metropolitan Opera: Maria Stuarda Live (STC) Sat 12:55
Les Misérables (PG) Fri-Sun 12:50-4-7:10-10:20 Mon-Tue 1-4:10-7:20-10:30 Wed 1 Thu 1-4:10-7:20-10:30 Wed 4:10-7:20-10:30
Monsters, Inc. 3D (G) Fri 12:30-2:50-5 Sat 5:05 Sun 12:30-2:50-5 Mon-Thu 1:05-3:15-5:25
Parental Guidance (G) Fri 1:30 Sat 11:05-1:30 Sun-Thu 1:30
Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri 12:40-2:55-5:15 Sat 11-1:05-3:25-5:30 Sun 12:40-2:55-5:15 Mon 1:25-4 Tue-Thu 1:25-3:30-5:40
Skyfall (PG) Fri-Sat 4:05-7:05-10:15 Sun 4:05-7:05-10 Mon 4:05-7:05-10:15 Tue 4:05-7:05-10:30 Wed-Thu 4:05-7:05-10:15
This Is 40 (14A) Fri-Sat 1:30-4:35-7:40-10:30 Sun 12:55-4:15-7:10-10:05 Mon-Thu 1:10-4:15-7:15-10:05
U2 3D (PG) Wed-Thu 7:30
Zero Dark Thirty (14A) No Passes Fri-Sat 12:20-3:40-7-10:50 No Passes Sun 12:20-3:30-7-10:20 No Passes Mon 3:05-7:10-10:25 No Passes Tue 3:05-7:10-10:35 No Passes Wed-Thu 3:05-7:10-10:25

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Jennifer Lopez.

Jennifer Lopez chasing a new lover named Oscar

Jennifer Lopez's career is doing just fine, but there's at least one item she still has her heart set on: an Oscar.

"I think everybody that has ever taken acting seriously would love to be recognized in that way," Lopez tells E! News.

"Of course! Why not?"

She's even good about keeping her acceptance speech up to date, should the need for it arise.

"It changes every so often over the years," Lopez says.

"Different people, different things."

Russell Crowe

Crowe shoots down romantic rumours

Russell Crowe has taken to Twitter to refute a New York Post story that he and burlesque star Dita Von Teese are an item.

The paper reported that the pair had enjoyed "a romantic couple's massage" at the Four Seasons hotel in New York last month and have been getting flirty.

"Dita Von Teese is brave, smart, sweet and elegant. She is a friend of mine. Who wouldn't want friends like that? Friends, not lovers," Crowe tweeted after the item appeared.

The Word

Is Lohan working as a high-paid escort?

Lindsay Lohan has reportedly found a new way to help pay off her hefty debts. Her father, Michael Lohan, and other sources claim that the troubled actress is making money working as a high-class escort, according to Star magazine.

"She is getting paid to date rich men," Michael says, putting the blame squarely on his ex-wife, Dina Lohan. "Dina is pimping her out. It's disgusting."

But so far there are no allegations of Lindsay providing any services more intimate than acting as arm candy.

"The dates last for days, and the guys pay for everything — hotel, travel costs, food, whatever — as well as jewelry and other gifts," another source tells the magazine.

Nicole Kidman. ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Kidman not weirded out by peeing on Zac Efron

Nicole Kidman has been getting plenty of attention for her Golden-Globe-nominated role in the Paperboy thanks to an infamous scene in which she urinates on Zac Efron.

But Kidman doesn't get what the big deal is.

"I just don't find urination shocking. I think I peed in the beginning of Eyes Wide Shut, too. But then, I don't find a lot of things shocking. Violence is a lot more shocking than sex — sex is primal," she tells the Hollywood Reporter.

"I felt shy singing in Moulin Rouge, but peeing — no, not shy."

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Liquid Assets

Old and new school taste

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

French wines are a lot like David Bowie. Just when you think they've got nothing new to offer, they come out of nowhere with a brand new vibe based on their old school legacy.

While Bowie has his first album in a decade dropping in March, savvy wine lovers are rediscovering the value found across France — especially in its lesser known regions like the Côtes du Rhône. Though famous for Châteauneuf-du-Pape — its liquid love letter to the pope — many wine newbies are surprised to discover that the Rhône Valley is the original home of both the red syrah (a.k.a. shiraz) and grenache grape varieties.

Grenache dominates the southern portion of the valley, where the bright-fruited berry makes up the majority of the area's blends. Most are smooth, new worldly wines with great food appeal (think everything from hearty stews and lamb to a relaxed charcuterie platter).

Famille Perrin is a regional superstar and its grenache-led 2010 Côtes du Rhône Réserve Rouge ($15.95 to $17.99) is rich and elegant with licorice and wild berry aromatics and a meaty, mouth-filling body of balanced black fruit.

PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.

Chicken and Waffles add soul to brunch

Quick eats. Good food doesn't have to take forever to prepare with this delicious recipe

This recipe serves four. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicken and Waffles combines the best of the breakfast and dinner worlds in one soul food dish made famous by the Southern U.S.

There's even a whole chapter devoted to the meal in Fried Chicken: An American Story by John T. Edge.

In it, he writes that the dish goes back to the late 19th century, when Southern African-Americans, recently freed from slavery, began migrating to the northern United States.

According to Edge: "My guess is that it comes from the days when someone would go out in the morning and wring a chicken's neck and fry it for breakfast.

"Preparing a breakfast bread with whatever meat you have on the hoof, so to speak, comes out of the rural tradition."

The fried chicken is usually served with a waffle that is covered in butter or syrup. This version, however, is more like the traditional Pennsylvania Dutch dish, which consists of a plain waffle with pulled, stewed chicken covered in gravy.

But it's even easier than that when you use store-bought waffles and rotisserie chicken.

No frozen waffles handy? You can serve this chicken and gravy over toasted slabs of sourdough bread too.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Two 4-oz containers sliced button mushrooms
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 4 frozen waffles
- Meat from a 2-lb rotisserie chicken, warmed and shredded

1. In a large skillet over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the mushrooms, onion and garlic, then sauté until the mushrooms are browned and the pan is nearly dry, about 5 minutes.

2. Add the wine and stir to deglaze the pan. When the wine has evaporated, stir in the cream, then bring to a simmer. Season with salt and pepper, then set aside.

3. Toast the waffles according to package directions. Place one toasted waffle on each serving plate. Top with a heap of warmed, shredded chicken, then spoon ample amounts of mushroom gravy over it.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/ WITH FILES FROM METRO

A flavour of one small screen kitchen

Anthony Bourdain. Celebrity chef takes on judging full time on ABC's The Taste

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

Alongside Nigella Lawson, Ludo Lefebvre and Brian Malarkey, celeb chef Anthony Bourdain will judge The Taste, which pits home cooks against professional chefs in a contest where every dish is sampled blind in one bite.

How did the home cooks measure up against professional chefs?

The people that did well were aggressive with their seasoning. They were looking to make an impression and they were very forward with their flavours. We were fooled all the time with that. "Oh, this is a professional." No, it turned out. We were four very jaded palates, and I think that the cooks who figured that out were the ones who did well. These are people who've eaten a lot of food. Truffle oil is not going to work with these people. People who cooked looking for an emotional response, I think, were the ones who did well. I think we were all very emotionally involved in the progress of this show.

Were the challenges designed to take into account both types of contestants?

The challenges were all designed beforehand, and there were a couple that were geared more toward home cooks. A comfort food challenge is obviously in a zone where a home cook is just as likely to be as good at it as a professional. I'm not going to say which one, but there was one challenge where it was just a slaughterfest, where everybody across the board just really had a hard time with it, and there was a lot of weeping and rending of garments. I'm talking about the judges (laughs).

Anthony Bourdain GETTY

Have a few gaps in your schedule you're looking to fill?
Whether you're hoping to dance, drink or just relax, check out these hot upcoming events.

MIX OF SIX
Julian Uzielli
london@metronews.ca

FARMERS FEED CITIES

Visit the farm

On Monday, Jan. 21, Garlic's of London (481 Richmond St.) is offering Londoners a unique opportunity: meet the farmer who farmed your dinner. Garlic's is partnering with Farmers Feed Cities for the second annual Fresh From the Field dining event, which pairs high quality, local food with appreciation for those who produce it. Speakers will include representatives from McComb Farms, Renecker Farm, C'est Bon and Sun & Wind Farm. Call 519-432-4092 for reservations. $40 per person including a beverage. Image courtesy of Sarah Leone.

Imaging disaster

Museum London (421 Ridout St. N.) opens its latest exhibition tomorrow with the launch of Imaging Disaster, a collection of old and new pieces depicting natural and social catastrophes. The show highlights Quebec painter Joseph Légaré (1795-1855), whose arresting images of calamities will be the focus of a museum exhibition for the first time. The reception is on Friday, Feb. 1 at 8 p.m. Pictured: Joseph Légaré The Fire in the Saint-Jean Quarter, Seen Looking Westward, 1848, Oil on canvas, courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Nature talks

Habitats are everywhere in the Forest City. That's the theme of the eighth annual Nature in the City speaker series, co-sponsored by Nature London and the London Public Library. The talks, which focus on the wildlife and habitats found in and around London, began this week and continue each Tuesday until Feb. 19. This Tuesday's talk, Ferns and their Allies, will be given by Western University botanist Jane Bowels in the Wolf Performance Hall in the Central Library at 251 Dundas St. from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Admission is free. Photo by Paul Nicholson.

Aeolian art

On Wednesday, Jan. 23, Aeolian Hall (795 Dundas St.) opens their Winter Art Exhibition featuring two local artists. Married artists Artist 80085 and Uma Mara have been painting together for two years and use recycled materials and household supplies — like bed sheets, box springs and housepaint — to make their mixed-media creations. The opening reception, with a cash bar and a chance to meet the artists, is Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Pictured: Death of a Moth by Artist 80085 and Uma Mara, courtesy of Darin Addison

LONDON POETRY SLAM

Slam, bam, thank you ma'am

The first London Poetry Slam event of 2013 hits London Music Club (470 Colborne St.) tonight. Feature poet Lisa Slater, a finalist at the 2012 Individual World Poetry Slam, headlines the monthly event. The Vancouver scribe's poems explore issues of gender and identity, and how we learn about ourselves through love, sex and relationships. Bring your poems with you (team pieces welcome) and sign up at the door to speak — original work only. Admission is $5, doors open at 7:30 p.m. Photo courtesy of London Music Club.

Yuk yuk yuk

From Thursday Jan. 24 to Saturday Jan. 26, Yuk Yuk's comedy club (900 King St. in the Western Fair district) welcomes headliner John Ki to the stage. Ki has been doing standup since 2006, and is a recipient of Toronto radio station Q107's award for Funniest Person with a Day Job as well as the Hogtown Festival's Best New Talent award, and has performed at the Just For Laughs festival. There are shows at 8 p.m. each night and at 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Tickets are $22.50 and are available at westernfairdistrict.com. Photo courtesy of Danielle Vallis.

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Dual-threat dilemma for Falcons vs. Kaepernick

Conference championships. 49ers QB faces Falcons after he ran wild on Packers

Michael Turner's trademark high-pitched laugh filled the Falcons' locker room.

Asked about San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick, Turner grinned Thursday and said "I'm glad I'm not on defence."

Turner, the big running back, and the Falcons' offence want to hold the ball and limit Kaepernick's time on the field in Sunday's NFC championship game.

The Falcons have seen enough in Kaepernick's eight starts to respect the versatile quarterback with the long stride and strong right arm.

Kaepernick comes to Atlanta after running for 181 yards — an NFL record for a quarterback — with two touchdowns in last week's win over Green Bay. He also threw for 263 yards with two touchdowns. He became the third QB, after Otto Graham and Jay Cutler, to run and throw for at least two touchdowns in a post-season game.

The Falcons are impressed, even after facing such other dual-threat quarterbacks as Robert Griffin III, Cam Newton and Russell Wilson this season.

Linebacker Sean Weatherspoon says Kaepernick is unique.

"I think he's just a different guy altogether," Weatherspoon said. "He's a taller guy, obviously. I think he has a lot more speed. Russell is more of a quick guy. Colin is a faster guy."

Kaepernick's big game last week earned him the promise of more attention from the Falcons' defence.

"We definitely have to have somebody accounting for him," said Falcons safety Thomas DeCoud.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AFC championship

- New England gets a chance to extend its mastery in the final step to the Super Bowl on Sunday against Baltimore, the team the Patriots beat a year ago for the conference crown.
- That win made them 4-0 in home conference title games.

Atlanta Falcons Tony Gonzalez, front left, leads teammate Roddy White, right, and other Falcons to their indoor practice facility in Flowery Branch, Ga., on Wednesday. The Falcons' offence want to keep the ball in their hands and out of the hands of versatile 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick. DAVID TULIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IOC strips Armstrong of Olympic medal

Lance Armstrong, right, celebrates winning bronze in the men's individual time trials at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, with gold-medallist Viacheslav Ekimov, centre, and silver-medallist Jan Ullrich. LAURENT REBOURS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Thirteen years after he stood on the podium in Sydney, Lance Armstrong was stripped of his bronze medal from the 2000 Olympics because of doping.

The International Olympic Committee sent a letter to Armstrong on Wednesday night asking him to return the medal, just as it said it planned to do last month.

The move was confirmed on the same day that Armstrong's admission of using performance-enhancing drugs — after years of denials — was to be broadcast in an interview with Oprah Winfrey. The timing of the IOC move, however, was not related to the TV interview.

The IOC executive board discussed revoking the medal in December, but delayed a decision until cycling's governing body notified Armstrong he had been stripped of his seven Tour de France titles and all results since 1998. He then had 21 days to appeal.

Now that the deadline has expired, the IOC decided to take the medal away. The letter to Armstrong was also sent to the U.S. Olympic Committee, which would collect the medal.

The IOC opened a disciplinary case in November after a U.S. Anti-Doping Agency report detailed widespread doping by Armstrong and his teammates.

The report called it the most sophisticated doping program in sports.

The IOC will not reallocate Armstrong's bronze medal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Medal ride

Two months after winning his second Tour de France title in 2000, Armstrong took the bronze in Sydney in the road time trial behind winner and U.S. Postal Service teammate Viacheslav Ekimov of Russia and Jan Ullrich of Germany.

NBA

Knicks win in London showcase

Carmelo Anthony returned to his gold-medal past, scoring 26 points Thursday to lead the New York Knicks to a 102-87 win over the Detroit Pistons at O2 Arena in London, site of the Olympic final during last year's Games. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Double-dose of Grapes on HNIC

The long-delayed return of Hockey Night in Canada will feature an expanded in-studio panel of analysts and an extra dose of Don Cherry commentary that will air during the later game out of the West.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tennis

Nadal sets his comeback course

Rafael Nadal's return to tennis will be full-on after revealing he's entered three of the four clay-court events in the ATP's Latin American swing next month, starting in February in Chile.

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DESTINED FOR STATUS QUO?

With minimal roster changes following a 35-win season, it's hard to make a case for the Leafs improving over recent years

Like the surprise in the Cracker Jack box, no one's too sure what you'll get with the Toronto Maple Leafs this season.

Fans just hope it's better than the year before. And the year before that. And the year before that.

But the signs aren't too promising. GM Brian Burke is gone. Roberto Luongo hasn't arrived. There have been minimal changes to the team that went 35-37-10 and finished 13th in the East last season.

Toronto won just 10 of 33 games after the all-star break.

James van Riemsdyk came over from the Flyers in a June trade that reunited defenceman Luke Schenn with younger brother Brayden in Philadelphia. Matthew Lombardi was shipped to Phoenix and Tim Connolly, another veteran forward, placed on waivers.

"Well, that's what we're going to find out," captain Dion Phaneuf said when asked if he has a sense of how good the 2013 Leafs might be. "We're working towards getting off to a good start.

"I think we've been putting in a lot of good work here. I think our team looks good on the ice. The speed of our practices, the speed of (Wednesday's scrimmage) was an up-tempo style that we want to play.

"It's going to start really quick. Saturday night comes very fast. So we're looking forward to it."

Job 1 for head coach Randy Carlyle is fixing a porous defence. Toronto finished 29th in the league last season in goals against (264). Only Tampa (281) was worse.

Perhaps the good news is the once-proud franchise can only get better after a season that ended with a public apology from owners Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment.

"We have fallen short of everyone's expectations, and for that we are sorry," MLSE said in a newspaper ad. "We take full responsibility for how this team performs on the ice and we make no excuses."

And yet still Toronto fans come.

While the Florida Panthers offer $7-a-seat season tickets, the Leafs website offers a "Join the Waiting List" tab in its ticket section. The price of a discounted Panthers ticket probably won't get you a cold one at the Air Canada Centre.

While Carlyle looks to up the intensity and focus on the ice, he is also trying his best to change the culture of a team that hasn't made the playoffs since 2003-04.

Carlyle took over the slumping team on March 3 with 18 games left last season after Burke fired Ron Wilson in the midst of a 1-9-1 run.

"This is akin to an 18-wheeler going off a cliff," the then-GM said of the team's descent in the standings in announcing the coaching change.

Carlyle debuted in Montreal with a 3-1 win but the Leafs lost their next five games and the new coach finished with a 6-9-3 record.

The lockout has robbed Carlyle of valuable time to work with his team.

But the new regime is working hard to make changes.

Slogans such as "Mental Durability," "Make Today Count" and "Burn the Boats" adorn the Leafs dressing room at their practice facility.

Carlyle declined to detail the story behind "Burn the Boats," saying some things should remain in the dressing room.

"We believe that there are some things that we can always refer back to," Carlyle said. "And when you start trying to build a culture, we're not any different than anybody else, there are power-of-positive-thinking (tools), there are things that you try to do to bring the group back when adversity strikes."

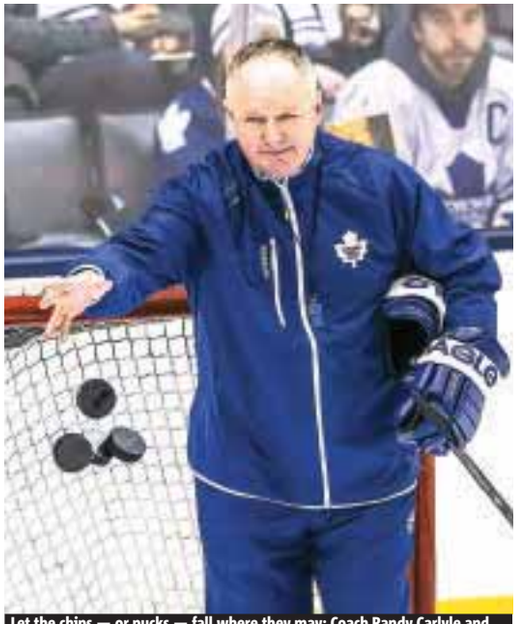
But goalie James Reimer spilled the beans in an interview with TSN radio.

"He (Carlyle) had a story about people crossing the sea to take the treasure," said Reimer. "When they got there, they burned their boats so they either had to take their treasure or die. That's what 'Burn the Boats' means."

The weekend trip to the Bell Centre is a return to the scene of the crime, in terms of the finale to last year's disappointing season. Toronto's seventh straight campaign without a glimpse of the postseason ended with a 4-1 loss in Montreal.

"The bottom line is we've got to — as a team — put a better product on the ice and play better as a group," said Phaneuf.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Let the chips — or pucks — fall where they may: Coach Randy Carlyle and Leafs nation just hope that brings an improvement over recent seasons.

DAVID COOPER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

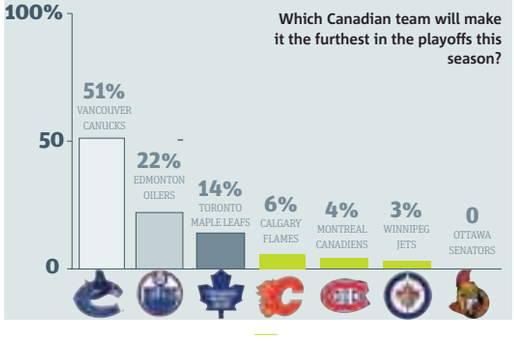
"The bottom line is we've got to — as a team — put a better product on the ice and play better as a group." Leafs captain Dion Phaneuf

Drop the puck

- **Saturday.** Leafs at Canadiens, 7 p.m. (CBC)
- **Monday.** Sabres at Leafs, 7 p.m.
- **Wednesday.** Leafs at Penguins, 7 p.m. (TSN)
- **Thursday.** Islanders at Leafs, 7 p.m.
- **Saturday.** Leafs at Rangers. (CBC)

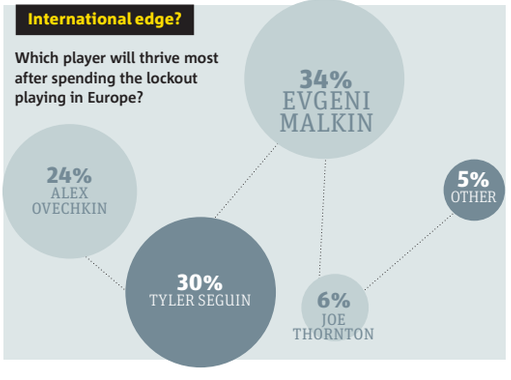
Metro readers' poll

Which Canadian team will make it the furthest in the playoffs this season?



International edge?

Which player will thrive most after spending the lockout playing in Europe?



Head games

Will Sidney Crosby remain healthy for the full season?

Northeast preview

With Tim Thomas taking a break from the crease, Boston's division crown might look ripe for the taking. But the Big Bad Bruins should still have enough firepower to hold off pushes from the comparatively young and inexperienced clubs making up the rest of the Northeast:

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Boston Bruins

Last season: 49-29-4, 102 points, 2nd seed in East.

Goaltending is the question as the 2011 Cup winners start the season with veteran Tim Thomas in Colorado, taking a sabbatical from hockey. And backup Tuukka Rask may be bothered by a groin injury incurred while playing in the Czech Republic. The Bruins should still have enough to take the Northeast Division.

Prediction: Second in East.

Buffalo Sabres

Last season: 39-32-11, 89 points, 9th in East.

With Ryan Miller in goal and a hard-working team in front of him there's always a chance for a breakthrough. Derek Roy was dealt to Dallas for forward Steve Ott and defenceman Adam Pardy. The rest is mostly unchanged, with 73-point man Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek still leading the attack. If prospect Mikhail Grigorenko makes the squad, it could be an offensive boost.

Prediction: 11th in East.

Montreal Canadiens

Last season: 31-35-16, 78 points, 15th in East.

Top defenceman Andrei Markov's oft-injured knee held up in the KHL during the lockout, which should help their anemic power play. Defence will be a strength in a short season as the Habs have eight ready to go.

Their top line of David Desharnais, Erik Cole and Max Pacioretty should get more support with captain Brian Gionta back from injury for the second unit.

Prediction: Ninth in East.

Ottawa Senators

Last season: 41-31-10, 92 points, 8th in East.

The emergence of Erik Karlsson as a top-level puck-moving defenceman and point man compensates for the uncertainty about the future of veteran Sergei Gonchar and the loss of Jared Cowan to hip surgery.

They have decent goaltending in Craig Anderson and enough scoring to give 40-year-old Daniel Alfredsson's swan song some style, if indeed he will ever choose to retire.

Prediction: Sixth in East.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Last season: 35-37-10, 80 points, 13th in East.

The post-Brian Burke era begins with big questions in goal and an already-thin defence likely to start without injured Jake Gardiner. The progression of the promising young talent in the organization could make a difference. Even fifth overall draft pick Morgan Reilly could start on defence. There's scoring up front with Joffrey Lupul and Phil Kessel.

Prediction: 14th in East.

RIVALRY GAMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER FOR LEAFS

THE HOCKEY NEWS
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Maple Leafs ownership stunned the hockey world last week when it chose to fire general manager Brian Burke and replace him with assistant GM Dave Nonis. But although the organization's long-term future certainly will be affected by the move, management's more pressing concern of making the playoffs for the first time since 2004 hasn't changed at all. However, it won't be easy.

Indeed, given the NHL's unbalanced 48-game schedule — which has all teams playing 18 games within their division and the remaining 30 games against teams from the other two divisions within their conference — the Leafs must improve drastically on their abysmal 9-14-1 record against the Northeast Division last season. To a degree, the schedule-maker has been good to Toronto this season, giving the Leafs five games apiece against the Ottawa Senators (who were just 9-12-3 in intra-division play last year) and Montreal Canadiens (10-8-6) and just four each against division champion Boston (19-4-1) and Buffalo (13-6-5). However, all those teams have as good a chance of making the playoffs as Toronto does — if not a better chance.

Do the Leafs have the components in place to end their playoff drought? If you looked at the team in the first half of the 2011-12 campaign, you'd quickly say yes. If you saw the same group of guys that utterly collapsed the rest of the way, you'd take a lot more time to say yes — and even then, you'd be hesitant to bet any great amount of money or pride on it. The reality is Toronto remains a team in transition, one that still doesn't have an elite young franchise-superstar player — at least at forward; 2012 first-round draft pick Morgan Rielly may get there as a defenceman and fellow blueliner Jake Gardiner has looked phenomenal at the pro level — and isn't close to being a legitimate Stanley Cup threat. The Leafs' prospect cupboard improved under Burke, but it still was ranked only 20th in the league in quality in the most recent edition of THN's Future Watch. There's a ways to go.

Talent turmoil

The reality is Toronto remains a team in transition, one that still doesn't have an elite young franchise-superstar player.

Of course, that timeline for success could be shortened if Toronto completed the long-rumored acquisition of Canucks star goalie Roberto Luongo. The Leafs simply aren't experienced enough in net with James Reimer and Ben Scrivens, but with Luongo on board, their post-season chances would drastically improve.

Regardless, they've got to take care of business against the Sabres, Bruins, Habs and Sens. Failure in that department almost assuredly dooms the Buds to the draft lottery yet again.

Three Leafs to watch

Nazem Kadri

He's only 22, but Kadri is at a crucial point in his Leafs career. Now in his third pro season, he's been solid for the AHL Marlies, yet must produce relatively quickly at the NHL level or he could be traded.

Leo Komarov

The 25-year-old Finnish centre played the past three years in Russia. He isn't big (five-foot-10, 187 pounds), but the Leafs are high on his competitiveness and he'll be given a good shot to succeed on the third or fourth line.

Ben Scrivens

The cerebral goalie has been a big reason why the Marlies have enjoyed success and he could play a notable role in a number of respects: as the starter if he wins the job from James Reimer, or as trade bait.

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
Certain goals may seem to be out of your reach but they are not. The planets are urging you not just to aim high but to aim higher than ever before. All things are possible if you want them enough.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You seem reluctant to put your point of view across. Why is that? If you have something of value to say, you have not just a right but a responsibility to speak up. So speak up.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
It may appear as if someone you work or do business with has been cheating you but can you be sure? The planets warn you cannot trust your senses today, so err on the side of caution and don't make accusations.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You won't have any trouble getting others to back your ideas today but you may be in trouble later on if they don't work out the way you expected. For that reason alone make it clear there are no guarantees.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Some kind of habit is holding you back and it's time you got past it. Simply stopping won't do it — you've tried that before. The trick is to replace a bad habit by a good habit.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Avoid poking fun at people in positions of power, no matter how tempting it may be. Laughter is only the best medicine if it is the kind that everyone can share in. Anything else could be dangerous today.

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Don't take what you are told at face value. Check the facts for yourself. What others say may sound convincing but more likely it's just self-serving. Do your homework and avoid making costly mistakes.

Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You may be resentful that changes of one sort or another have been forced on you but there is no point making a fuss. The best you can do is to go with the flow and not draw attention to yourself.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Resist the temptation to talk up the facts as others may see that as a form of deception. It may be easy enough to do but in the long-term you will regret it. Protect your reputation for honesty at all costs.

Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The planets warn that your powers of intuition are on the blink and not to be trusted, at least for the next 24 hours. Stick to what you know to be true and in other matters be exceptionally cautious.

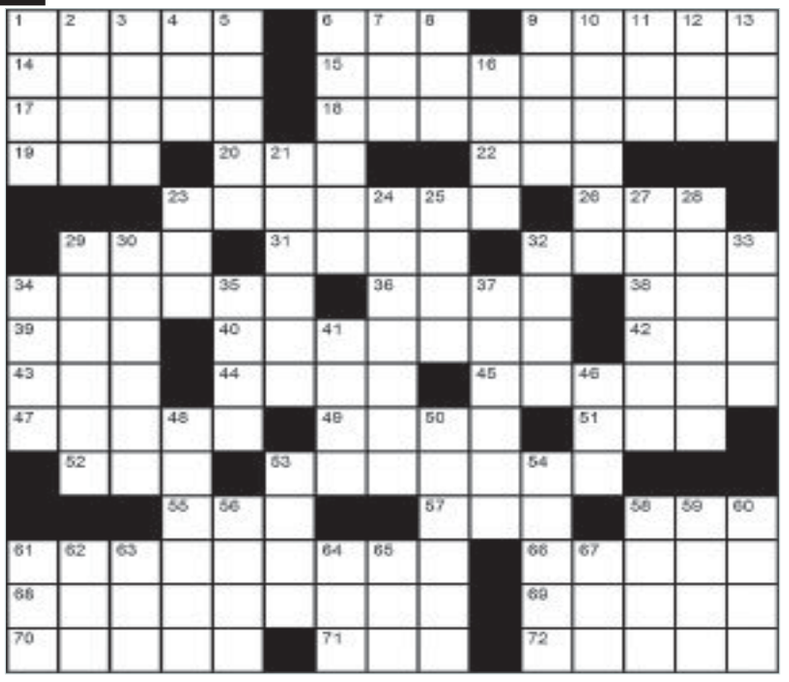
Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Try not to let your fears get out of hand over the next 24 hours. Take your mind off your worries by focusing on all the things you have to be thankful for. That should keep you busy for a while.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Those who think highly of you will help you out in any way they can today, but first you must ask. The Sun's link to communications planet Mercury means your wish is their command. So wish away.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

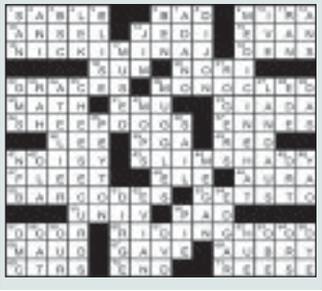
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Toronto __ Centre
6. Task
9. "__ la vista, baby." - The Terminator
14. CBC's "Republic of __"
15. BC's Revelstoke, for one: 2 wds.
17. Taylor Swift's "_ __ You Were Trouble"
18. On the costume of Bruce Wayne's alter ego: 2 wds.
19. 'Legal' suffix
20. Extinct bird
22. "The Simpsons" storekeeper
23. Reporter on "etalk", Traci __
26. Got [abbr.]
29. Jolt
31. Herring-like fish
32. Open court hearings
34. Formula
36. Endorse
38. Mr. Reed
39. __-locka, Florida
40. Ducks city
42. 'Serpent' suffix
43. Psychedelic†drug
44. Not is
45. __, Nova Scotia
47. Pretend
49. Destiny's Child hit: "Say My __"
51. Bronze Roman money
52. 'Part' add-on (Collaborator)
53. "Deuce __: Male Gigolo"
55. Green tropical fruit ...partially eaten here
57. Irish actor Stephen
58. Li'l accounting review
61. Green-haired Canadian icon: 3 wds.
66. Jennifer or Meg
68. The Glass __ (Tennessee Williams play)
69. US Supreme Court Justice Ms. Kagan
70. Fraternity letter
71. Wine aperitif
72. Singer/songwriter Sarah

Down
1. Ms. Falco
2. Says it's hunky-dory
3. Actress Ms. Daly
4. Grand Opry link
5. "Brand __ __" by Alicia Keys
6. German composer, in brief: _._. __ (b.1685 - d.1750)
7. Quebec-made cheese
8. Smidgen
9. Rope fiber
10. Bruce Springsteen album: 'Greetings from __ Park N.J.'
11. Pine-__
12. Green Day drummer, __ Cool
13. 24-hr. banker
16. Back
21. Mary-Kate and Ashley
23. Hosp. picture
24. Twitter's #
25. Garfield's pal
27. Chanteuse Ms. Dion
28. Pilotless aircrafts
29. Carly Rae __
30. Evangeline: A Tale of __ (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem)
32. Les Miz song: "__ Own": 2 wds.
33. Chop __
34. Massage for therapy
35. Rapper T-__
37. Ms. Bundchen
41. Years, in old Rome
46. Stealing bird
48. Alexander __ Bell
50. Sharpie product
53. Music systems company
54. Hall & __
56. "Luka" singer Suzanne
58. Helm position
59. Forearm bone
60. Ms. Cannon
61. First aid team [acronym]
62. Agnus __ (Mass prayer)
63. 1987 to 1994 'Star Trek' series, to fans
64. Mork's planet
65. Nero's 102
67. __-advised

Yesterday's Crossword

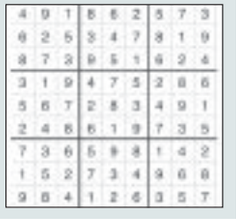


Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

9								1
	4	6				9	3	
			5	1	9			
		2	9	4	3	1		
7	3						2	9
		9	2	8	7	3		
			7	2	4			
	8	7				5	4	
6								2

Yesterday's Sudoku



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